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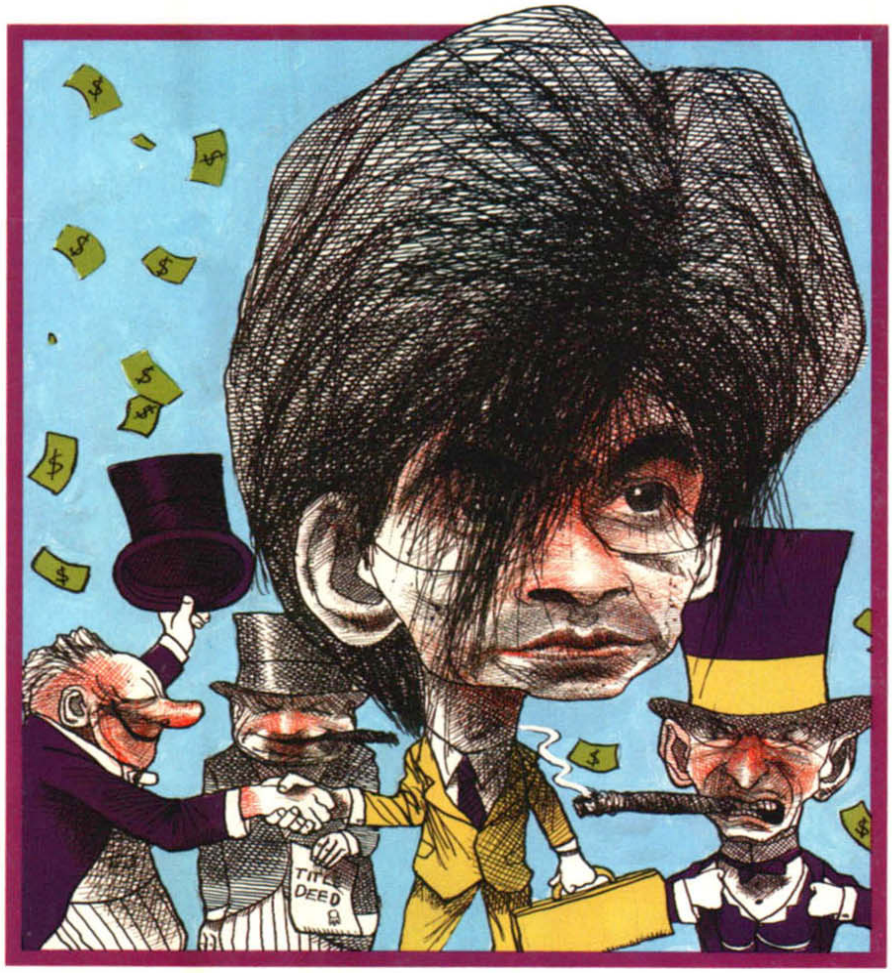

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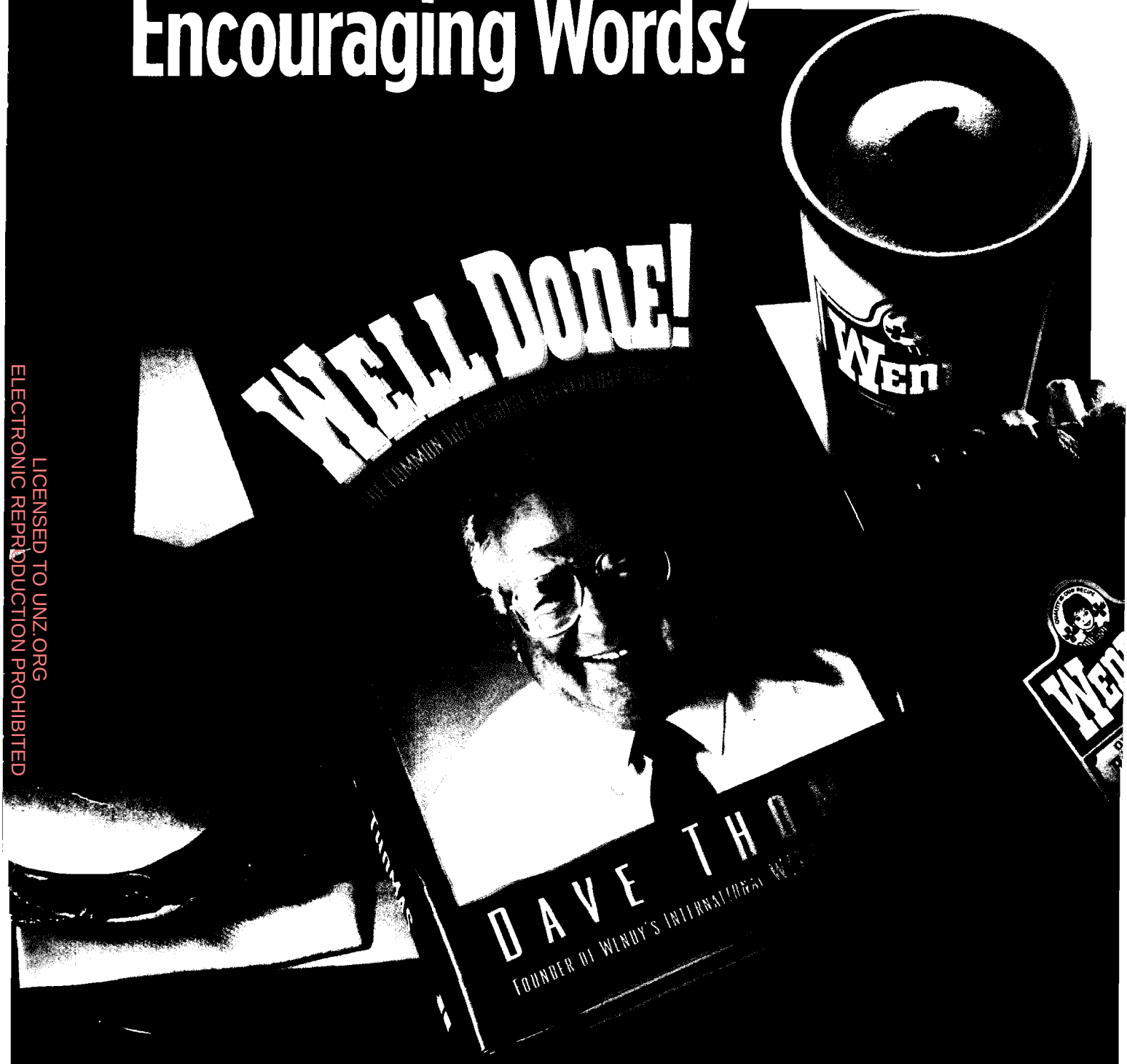

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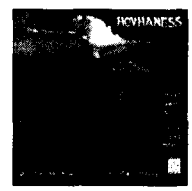

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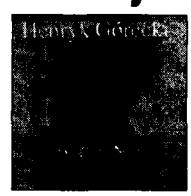

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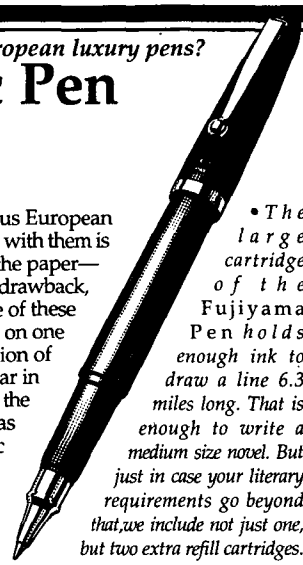

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ABOUT THIS MONTH

by

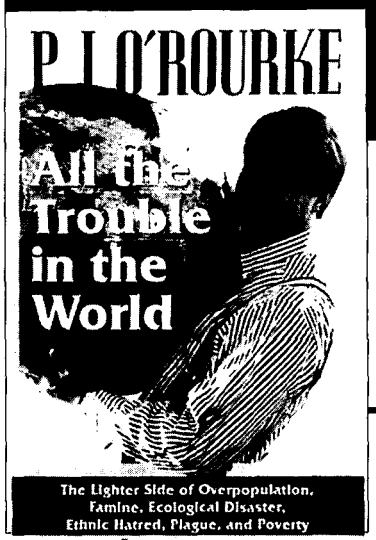
Wladyslaw Pleszczynski

IT FIGURED THAT IN his first direct confrontation with victims of Communism Bill Clinton would shun them as "illegals"—and then show up on Martha's Vineyard to prop his feet up on a golf cart chauffeured by first caddie (and much more) Vernon Jordan. Isn't life grand? On "Capital Gang," Democratic consultant Bob Shrum found reason to celebrate the president's pre-vacation crime-bill embarrassments. "I actually think the Republicans did Clinton a big favor because before this happened, health care was the test, and everybody assumed the crime bill was easy, would just sail through. They made the crime bill a big test for Bill Clinton. They thought he wasn't going to pass the test, and he did." In other words, what health-care reform? When a viscerally partisan president like Clinton bemoans "the danger that partisanship can bring to our deliberations," or a fevered congressman like Mike Synar accuses Republican colleagues of wanting to "destroy" the House of Representatives—all because they stopped acting like patsies—it's no longer simply a matter of a party that will say anything. Something happened in August, and the liberals very well know what it is.

ALL IT TOOK WAS one look at one aspect of the *Washington* phase of Whitewater—and what David Brock has termed the "culture of lying" came crashing down. Leading the way were the bogus patricians Lloyd Cutler and Lloyd Bentsen, who have now joined Clark Clifford as the dirty old men of Democratic politics. As Brock reports (see page 24), the Whitewater hearings raised a wide range of questions—which grow ever more damning as materials the Cutler crowd attempted to suppress continue to trickle in to the Senate. What a comment on their demise that today's liberals create victims groups like the RTC's Kansas City Three—the very sort of whistle-blowers they once championed (see page 41).

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS isn't likely to age disgracefully. These days he doesn't appear to know much about anything—though his memory did perk up when our reporter Matt Labash called him for this month's cover story (see page 30). Seems Mr. S. remembered receiving a call from Labash when the latter was working for the *Washingtonian* magazine, and presciently asked Mr. S. about movies he'd take to a desert island. For Stephanopoulos's sake, let's hope this St. Helena doesn't become one of his boss's "safe havens" for Cubans.

HAVE THE LIBERALS GOT TROUBLE NOW!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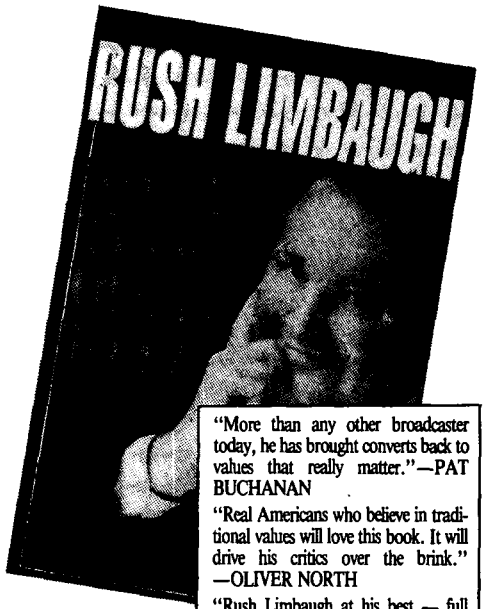

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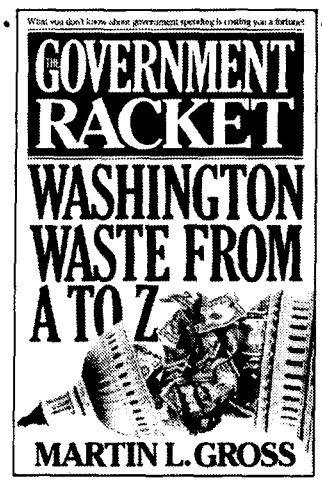
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Lloyd Cutler and Lloyd Bentsen's unseemly cooperation in suppressing investigations into the Washington phase of Whitewater is only one of many new facts emerging in the wake of this summer's hearings—all of them suggesting that we ain't seen nothing yet.

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Is that what top people at NationsBank were thinking when they gave Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos an exceptional $668,000 loan?

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The muzzling of the Kansas City Three is turning into the smoking gun of the Whitewater scandal.

Cover illustration by John Springs. Interior art by John Springs and Ismael Roldán.

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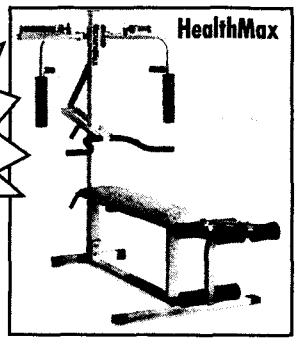

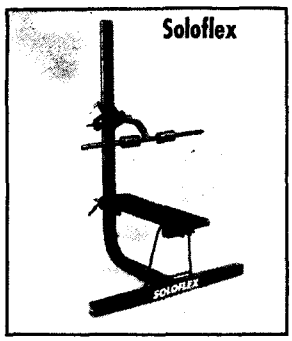

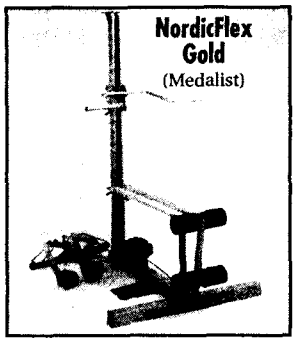

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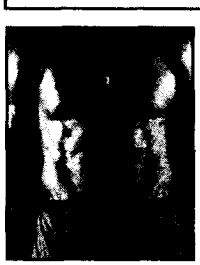

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• August was another triumphant month for Our President and his elegant wife, Bruno. Neither was subpoenaed or indicted or even asked to take a polygraph. True, in Jersey City, New Jersey, on August 1, as he extolled his health-care scheme, he walloped his lectern for emphasis, and the presidential seal fell off. It is also True that several days later, during his matutinal jog, he scuffed some bodily parts after tripping in front of the Watergate. Nor can it be Denied that two Administration officials (one a college Chum) were pressured to retire from Public Life by incredulous Senators who are of the Opinion that these officials Clintoned repeatedly during Senate Whitewatergate hearings. Moreover, it appears that an astonishingly high incidence of Alzheimer's Syndrome has hit the Administration, which is Troubling, given the Administration's refreshing youthfulness and immaturity. Early in the month, a score of Administration officials testified before the Senate Banking Committee—many entering the room unassisted by walkers or attendants—yet hardly any could remember Anything. One or two even stumbled over his or her name. Secretary of the Treasury Lloyd Bentsen, after his oblivious testimony, appeared even to have forgotten which door led out of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, and the old boy may have exited into a Closet. If he did, his inconvenience could have lasted for hours. Certainly none of his aides would have remembered to look for him. They were among the Administration's most Forgetful. One, Mr. Joshua Steiner, could not even remember what he was supposed to Forget. He even forgot that his diary was a Diary. Alzheimer's Syndrome has been particularly devastating to Mr. Steiner's fellow Rhodes scholar, Mr. George Stephanopoulos, who sat Listlessly before the Senators blankly intoning "I do not remember" more times than anyone can remember. The pathos of the scene made a lot of the many Washington cuties who adore Mr. Stephanopoulos's mousy good looks Very Sad; and as his dark suits made Painfully Clear, he has a terrifying case of Dandruff.

• There were, alas, other Mournful Tidings. On August 11, the vast majority of House Republicans, along with fifty-eight adults from the Democratic Party, blocked consideration of President Clinton's Inaccurately Named crime bill. Just hours later Republicans in the Senate scotched another of President Clinton's Inaccurately Named bills, the health-care bill. Oh yes, and a three-judge panel did cashier the inscrutable Mr. Robert Fiske whilst tapping former solicitor-general Kenneth Starr to serve as independent counsel. What is more, a year after the Clinton budget raised Taxes and Spending with the solemn promise that these measures would cut interest rates, interest rates Rose for the fifth time this year. And finally, a Gallup-CNN-*USA Today* poll put Our President's national approval rating at its lowest ever, 39 percent. But who can trust such a poll when so many other things are going so Right for this remarkable collection of moral and intellectual colossi?

• There was more bad news for Mr. O.J. Simpson. His attorneys reported on August 15 that a biopsy of tissue taken from the famous athlete's lymph nodes shows no signs of cancer. Authorities at West Virginia's year-old, $12.5 million South Central Regional jail are braving lawsuits by prisoners' rights groups and ending the sale of dental floss at that beleaguered facility. The move came two months after Mr. Robert Dale Shepard, 34, as reported here last month, escaped by climbing a rope that he had quietly and unobtrusively braided from forty-eight packages of mint-flavored, waxed floss purchased in the commissary. In the plush north side of Indianapolis, Indiana, that reign of terror that has forced many neighborhood women to wear shoes all summer long ended when police arrested Mr. Melvin W. Harney. Mr. Harney was arrested for accosting women, threatening them at gun point, and either fondling or licking their toes whilst masturbating. On at least three occasions the 24-year-old cleaning worker, who is not well known in the area, approached unsuspecting women and claimed he was brushing a bug or some other foreign object from their toes. Then things would get out of hand. Police expect other women to come forward, and on the day he was arrested, August 19, a hitherto unheard-from woman called police charging that whilst she was shopping for her fall wardrobe a man lying under a clothing rack licked her feet. Mr. Harney is being charged with

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several offenses of a sexual nature. He does have the option of filing his own suit against some of the nation's leading manufacturers of nail polish for packing euphoriants into their product that drive men such as Mr. Harney to desperation. This could be the beginning of a Foot Fetishists' Rights Movement! Toe-lickers have rights, too.

• Now it is the Christian Left's turn and its members have been particularly active this past month. Alarmed by the murder of Dr. John Britton, an abortionist, in front of an abortion clinic, a clandestine group in Florida has vowed to kill ten priests for every one person killed in front of an abortion clinic. Miss Mary Ross Agosta of the Catholic Archdiocese of Miami verified that the threat was made in a telephone call on August 10, and that neither nuns nor altar boys were mentioned, only priests, which is pretty sexist and ageist for people who brag of their progressive ideals. In Union Beach, New Jersey, a defender of rats, Mr. Lee Bernstein, has discovered a wooden crucifix on his front lawn with a dead baby muskrat nailed to it in a crucifixion-like position. And speaking of crucified rats, after being ousted from leadership of the NAACP, Mr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. compared his removal on charges of mismanagement and sexual harassment to the Crucifixion. Speaking the day after his dismissal, he told an anti-NAACP rally that his earlier selection as NAACP executive director "took place on Good Friday. Now there has been a crucifixion. But today we celebrate the resurrection." Well, okay, Mr. Chavis, but from what two women have alleged in their sexual harassment complaints, can we lay that "crucifixion" and "resurrection" to your perpetual state of arousal? It was that along with financial ineptitude that turned you into this preposterous messiah *manqué*.

• Mr. James Herriot, author of *All Creatures Great and Small*, has suffered a painful embarrassment. Made world-renowned by his gentle accounts of the irenic ways of farm animals and of the lovable British country veterinarian who befriends them, the 77-year-old writer was repeatedly butted and trampled by sheep on his front lawn. He was attempting to dissuade the sheep from devouring another of his improbable friends, the many blades of grass on his lawn. Green grass is actually not the boring impersonal stuff it seems to be, but quite loving and intelligent. Late at night Friends of the Grass can put their ears to it and hear a kind of communication between the many blades. Sometimes they sing in a nocturnal chorus of great beauty. Now that Mr. Herriot has had his fill of farm animals, maybe he or some other dotty Brit will prepare a book on this stupefying subject, titling it *All Things Green and Great.*

• On August 14, Carlos the Jackal, the world's most wanted terrorist was arrested in Sudan while under anesthesia for a tummy tuck. That is what the *Observer* of London reported on August 21, along with pictures of the pudgy murderer that put one in mind of yet another murderer with a bon-bon problem, the late Mao Tse-tung. In Conway, Arkansas, Miss Robin Carson, an ex–frozen yogurt store cake decorator, pled guilty to putting a laxative in cake icing destined for a customer who was rude to Miss Carson's boyfriend, the store manager. Seventeen customers were deleteriously affected.

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Macdeth Watch

The creativity of Francis X. Bacon's "The Tragedy of Macdeth" (*TAS*, August 1994) brought the tears and jaw ache that only the funniest stuff could cause.

—Charles W. McGuire
Willard, Missouri

To Mr. Bacon, on Macdeth

In all the chronicle of wasted time
No antique pen more pointed could express
What thou with thy computer didst make Rhyme
And Reason of—most grim and ghastly mess.
Though n'er in praise thine anthems ever be
Of folly decked in foetid flowers of fame,
The foulest deeds of 'Deth and Hillary
By contrast to thy wit seem limping, lame.
Thou skeweredest with piercing, mordant words,
Shade of Immortal Bard, O Francis X,
And hoisted high upon their own petards
Such scoundrels as do even angels vex.
And we who now bemoan these present times
Applaud our sharpest chronicler of crimes.

—Esther Summerson
St. Louis, Missouri

"Macdeth" is a *classic*! All honors to Francis X . . . a work of art.

—Jim Zeigler
Lemon Grove, California

"The Tragedy of Macdeth" by Francis X. Bacon is priceless!

—R. I. Lengel
Honesdale, Pennsylvania

"The Tragedy of Macdeth" is absolutely priceless—WS didn't do any better. It is worth reading at least twice and really should be played at Stratford-on-the-Potomac.

—Sarah G. Hultgren
Portland, Oregon

"The Tragedy of Macdeth" was worth the price of a year's subscription! It deserves to be expanded to full length and produced for the stage—or at least the audio tape market. (The Clinton imitator heard in Rush's parodies would be a great Macdeth!)

—Eric Beheim
Lakeside, California

Simply marvelous! Astonishingly, gratifyingly marvelous!

Please extend my subscription lifetime, and send me the bill.

—Neil G. Howland
Saugus, Massachusetts

Whoever wrote "Macdeth" (Francis X. Bacon of the Vatican indeed!), from whatever PC University he's hiding in, I hope you can pry him loose occasionally and convince him to let us see more of his genius. We need a few laughs these days.

—Burton P. Brodt
New Orleans, Louisiana

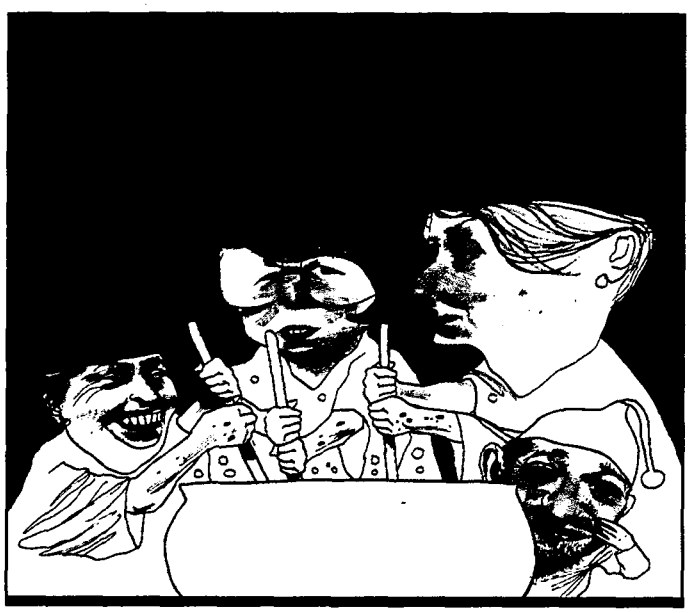
Now, finally, we know who wrote Shakespeare's plays!

—Caroline S. Chase
Alexandria, Virginia

Beyond Macdeth

Hail Bacon! Bard of Rome!
Thou art colossus of word and wit,
for a million sides, thou hath split.
But thy mighty mirth doth question pose,
that lies beyond the state or fate
—of stubborn orbs in garden hose.
My question be simply this:
wouldst thou, Sir, O pray wouldst thou
soon take thy talent's task beyond *Macdeth*
—to Rome's ancient naughty?
For only ancient Rome hath depth enow
to take full measure of—Caligula Clinton
—and his Beltway scumerati.

—Jack C. Sloan
Denver, Colorado



Omaha Beach Revisited

Yale Kramer's article "Day at the Beach" (*TAS*, August 1994) made for an excellent read, but accuracy compels me to point out that as numerous writers before him have done, he mistakenly refers to the D-Day amphibious assault at Normandy as "Operation Overlord." Overlord was actually the master Allied strategic plan for the offensive military operations designed to liberate Europe from German occupation and the eventual conquest of Germany herself. The proper designation of the landing phase itself, what has since come to be known as "D-Day," was code-named Operation Neptune. Had Neptune not succeeded, there would have been no Overlord.

—John M. Bloodworth, Jr.
Metairie, Louisiana

In his otherwise excellent piece, Yale Kramer ventures on ground he knows little about, as evidenced by his crassness on the subject of France and the French. Has he ever heard of Verdun, for instance? Has he ever wondered how *this* country would have fared had it been overrun by a neighbor, not across 3,000 miles of ocean, not across the English Channel, but right on its doorstep, with twice its population, twice its industrial capacity, only one ally able to make only a token contribution, and mere 500 miles of depth of territory in which to make a retreat?

I wonder what his personal experience has been to make him write such enormities. Mine, based on having been parachuted into occupied

(continued on page 81)

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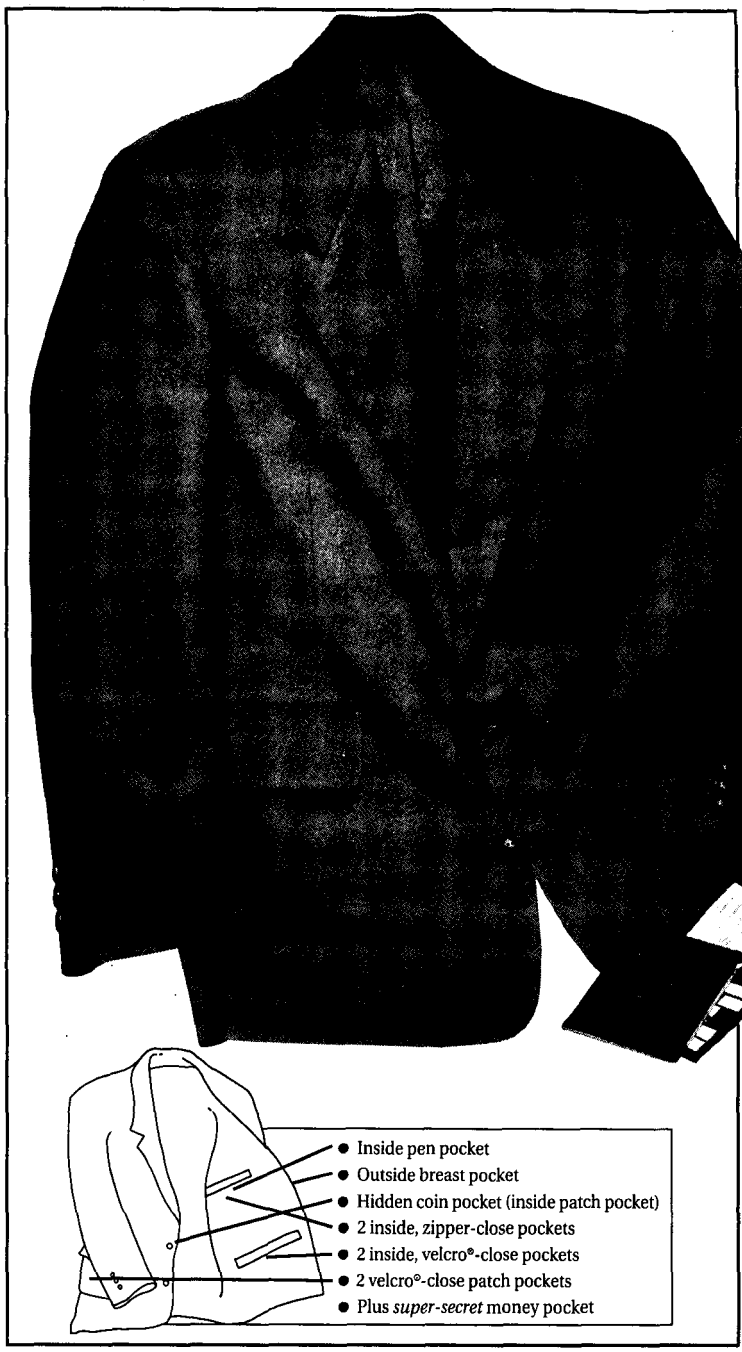

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Bouncy-Bouncy

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Washington, the idyllic hick town in which I dwell, is in another of its episodic fevers about the big, lovable lug of a boy whom we call "Mr. President." As the incomparable *Washington Post* put it, "A booming economy has proven to be a political bust for President Clinton." The story went on to wonder over how the president's job approval rating could have again plummeted.

Why the press gets so excited over a failed president's low ratings will mystify normal minds. Actually, Clinton's ratings have bounced around the lower levels of approbation since he tripped past his first hundred days. Then his approval rating was at 55 percent, the lowest of any president at that juncture since such polling began. His ratings bounced up a bit over the next few weeks and then dropped to a record low of 36 percent. *Time* magazine's cover roared about "The Incredible Shrinking President." Again, all Washington was in a fever. Presently, the bouncing president rebounded above 50 percent, whereupon his ratings dropped again. Now, perhaps for stage effect, the press reports that early this year Clinton had leapt to a whopping 57 percent in the polls. By mid-summer he thudded to 47 percent, despite a "booming" economy. (As we go to press, he has sunk to 39 percent.) And the *Post* summons Dr. Thomas E. Mann from the Brookings Institution to inform us that in such times of "boom" a president's approval rating should be 60 percent.

Well, to begin with, the economy is not "booming," and I would think some editor in preparing the *Post's* story might have pointed that out. As economist Alan Reynolds wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* the other day, Clinton's economy features "a falling labor force, falling productivity, falling savings, capital flight, soaring imports, and speculative inventory hoarding to beat inflation." Moreover, contrary to the central goal of Clinton's economic package last summer, long-term interest rates have risen from 5.35 percent last September to 7.28 percent today. We are in a low-growth recovery and headed for stagflation, à la the Carter administration of the late 1970s.

Secondly, this president has *never* been particularly popular with the electorate. He won the presidency with a mere 43 percent—three percentage points less than his predecessor as Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis, corralled on losing to George Bush. That this president has a low approval rating—in an economy not much more robust than the one he harangued in 1992—is not all that surprising. What is surprising is that the press and Washington's political cognoscenti are surprised.

The Clintons came to Washington believing themselves to be God-like creatures summoned by a grateful people to liberate the Republic from years of poverty and sordidness. Their megalomania is not unusual. Large numbers of American politicians view themselves as a combination of Joan of Arc and Elvis Presley. It is unusual, however, when the tough-minded skeptics in the press fall for this delusion. I have in mind such nononsense types as Michael Kinsley, Sidney Blumenthal, and the estimable Eleanor Clift.

Actually, this whole presidency has been delusional. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the Clintons really believed that the Reagan years were a disaster for the Republic. They believed that President Bush's low-growth economy was a catastrophe to be rectified by higher

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Times *column syndicated by Creators Syndicate.*

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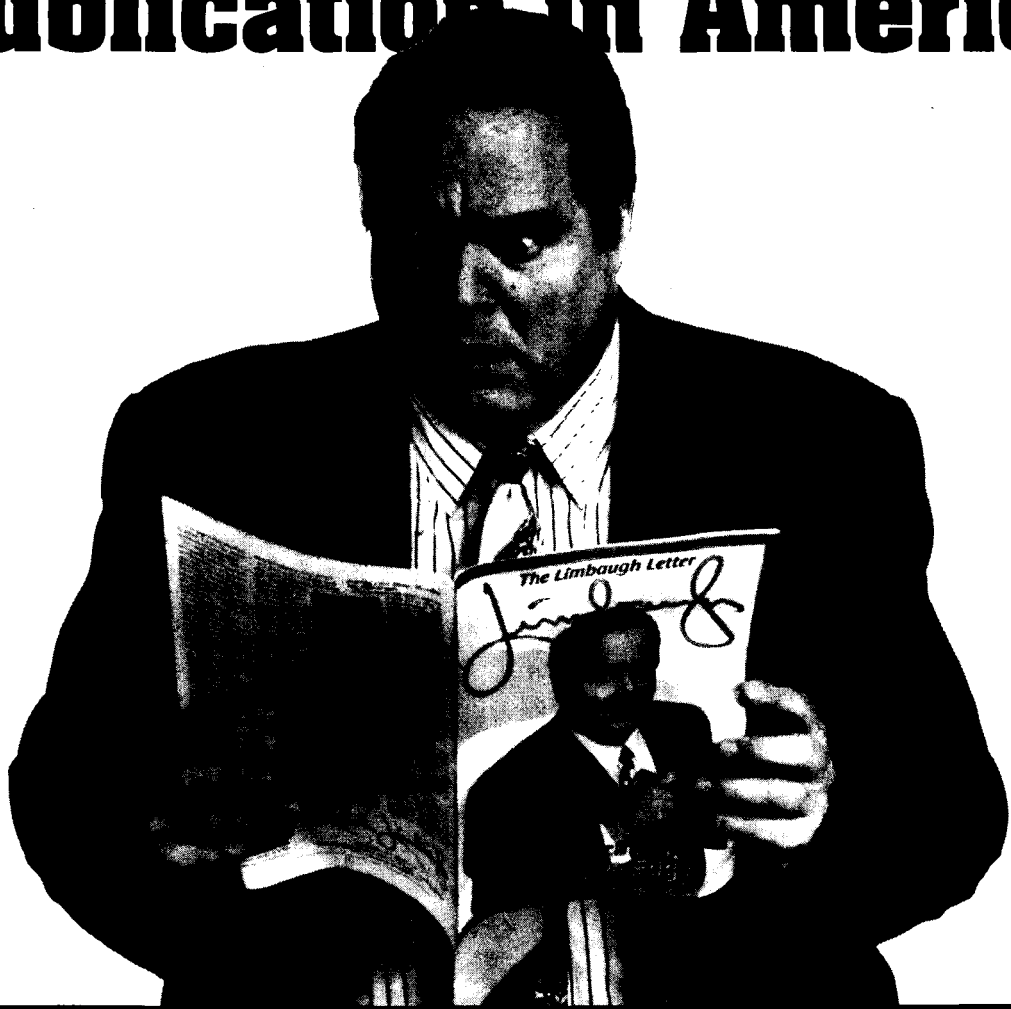

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taxes and more spending. They presented to Congress what the Clintons were pleased to call "the President's Plan." But it was a platypus. It had the budget cuts of an Eisenhower, the spending and taxing initiatives of a McGovern, and the economic coherence of a drunken playboy. Clinton was promising deficit reduction and more spending, a tax increase and growth. The "plan" was buttressed by no single economic theory known to man. Yet few pundits seemed to care.

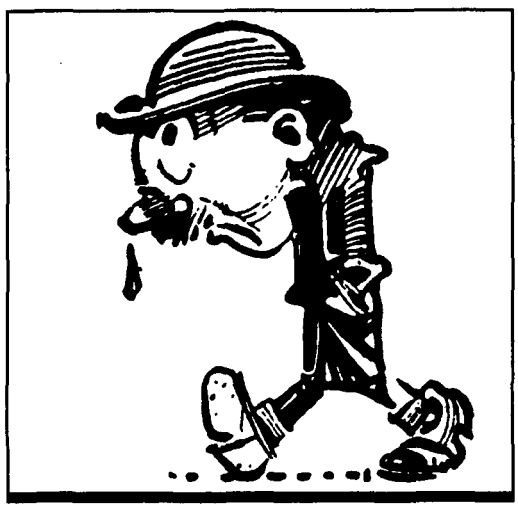
In fact, those who have consistently been critical of this buffoonish presidency have been made out to be oddities. Mrs. Clinton says they hate her. Mr. Clinton believes he is the victim of the "Christian right." Recent polls of the electorate, however, suggest that those dissatisfied with the Clintons are neither haters nor particularly right-wing. They are merely Americans who feel that a president should be held accountable for his actions. Clinton has done little for the economy. He has presided over a foreign policy that is as abundant with contradictions as his economic policy, and even less successful. Finally, he has repeatedly, blatantly, and recklessly lied to the electorate. One unspoken cause for President Clinton's perpetually low approval ratings is that the American people do not like to be lied to. ❐

Foul Mouths

In late July, NBC's newsmagazine "Dateline" broadcast an elegantly edited account of the joy my colleagues at *The American Spectator* and I have been bringing to the White House. The White House's surprisingly rude response crystallized in my mind several historic ironies. As we observe the twentieth anniversary of Richard Nixon's final fall from government, these ironies shout for attention. Nixon was hustled off stage for his abuse of power and for the coarse ways he brought to genteel Washington. His critics remain shocked by his behavior, particularly by the scandalous language embalmed on the White House tapes.

Well, as the Senate Banking Committee hearings groan on, and one Clinton aide after another denies lying, deceiving, and acting unethically or illegally, I perceive only irony. Consider Roger Altman. In the late 1960s he was an idealistic collegian with his friend Bill Clinton. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s he was sleepily making millions on Wall Street, raising funds for Democratic presidential candidates, attending conferences and politically correct soirées in New York's east seventies. He had campaigned for Bob Kennedy and followed a progressive course ever since. Imagine his indignation during the Watergate hearings when it became apparent that the Nixonians had lied to Congress, *lied to the American people*! Doubtless he was indignant during the Iran-contra hearings, too.

Now he sits very close to where Haldeman and Ehrlichman once sat, and he stands accused of lies, abuse of power, breaches of government ethics. Nor is he the only Clintonian under a cloud. From George Stephanopoulos to the president himself and his lovely wife, over a dozen Clintonians are seeing their credibility shredded. Yet the "Dateline" show put me in mind of another irony. The Clintonians are supposed to be better mannered than the Nixonians. They are supposed to be more intellectual and sophisticated. Alas, the graduates of Oxford and Yale are increasingly coming across as mere slobs, and rather provincial slobs at that.



Who did the White House roll out to unhorse me on "Dateline"? The suave James Carville, political wizard to progressive candidates everywhere. And what was his urbane rejoinder? He called me a "scumbag." Doubtless Clintonians resort to such words in the hope of conveying the heroic intensity of their feelings. What they actually convey is the coarseness and stupidity of their minds. "Scumbag" is not mere verbal abuse. It is an indecent term of abuse from the gutter. A *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* defines a scumbag as a condom, and it usually refers to a used condom. If that was the most acceptable reference Carville made to me, imagine the scurrility NBC had to edit out.

Actually it is unlikely that NBC's editors realized what the word meant. In fact, it is possible that Carville was ignorant of the word's meaning. Otherwise his derogatory use of a synonym for condom puts him on a collision course with another of the administration's intellectual exemplars, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders. She is one of the Republic's leading evangelists of the condom. She prescribes it for many of mankind's most grievous sadnesses. She has even been known to decorate her office with condoms. If Carville is right and I really am a used condom, Dr. Elders may celebrate me in poetry and song for having served a sound social purpose.

Carville is not the only foul-mouthed member of the administration. The pages of Bob Woodward's new book *The Agenda* are strewn with the profanity of White House aides and even those of the president himself. I have not come across foul language from Hillary Clinton yet, but then I have not been able to bring myself to finish Woodward's book. We do know from the testimony of Arkansas troopers and from political reporters who followed Mrs. Clinton's career in Arkansas that when provoked she can sound like . . . Well, she can sound like Richard Nixon on those scabrous White House tapes.

Yes, we are living through great days. Two decades ago Hillary Clinton and Bernard Nussbaum, now the discredited former White House Counsel, served on the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment commission. Soon they and the likes of Roger Altman were cluck-clucking over the dishonor Richard Nixon had brought to the presidency. Now, Clintonians, consider the pickle you are in—and clean up that language. It will sound appalling on tape. ❐

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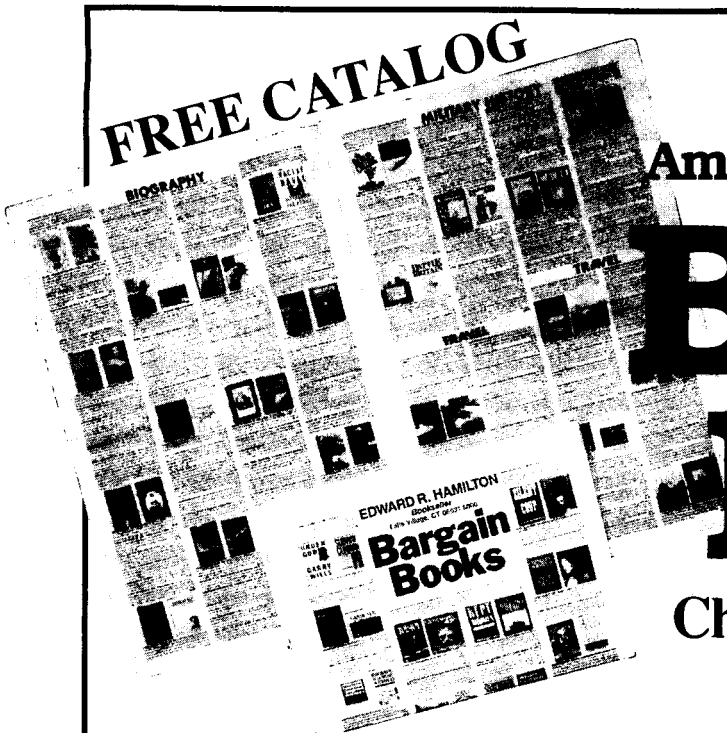

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Bearish on California

by Tom Bethell

The old cliché that national trends begin in California and move on to the rest of the country is thought to be no longer true. Probably with good reason. California is not quite what it was. If one region is to lead, it must be a place where experiments can be launched with relative ease. Business start-ups are the capitalist version of such experiments, and they have become an expensive proposition on the West Coast. The risk of failure is always so great that a competitive advantage in the form of low taxation and minimal legal restrictions is an essential prerequisite. That's what California no longer enjoys. Government has become a heavy burden. The coast-dwellers up and down the state—the real divide is not between northern and southern California but between coast-dwellers and inlanders—have long wanted California to resemble nothing so much as a European welfare state. Slowly but surely, they are getting their way.

Perhaps I'm too pessimistic. A decade ago, believing that greedy unions were on the verge of dispersing the movie industry, I wrote a premature obituary of Hollywood. I gather it managed to stay in business. It turns out that high labor costs are more than offset by the benefits of geographical concentration. The same applies to Silicon Valley today. Despite high land costs, it still seems to be humming along. Rich Karlgaard, the editor of *Forbes ASAP* (a bimonthly hi-tech supplement to *Forbes*), compares Silicon Valley to Manhattan, which, despite its many disadvantages, survives as a center of finance; so it is with Silicon Valley. "It still has this density of talent, ambition and activity, its venture capitalists and its banks who know how to deal with start-ups," Karlgaard said.

Still, land prices are taking their toll. "Apple is at a disadvantage compared with Compaq in Houston or Dell in Austin," he added. "If the manufacturing becomes people-intensive it has to move out of Silicon Valley." Other regions, whether in Arizona, Utah, or North Carolina, have lower taxes, the Mormon work ethic, and science graduates, and some of these strange places even *appreciate* economic growth. Karlgaard has this gut feeling, with no real data to back it up: "California may be pretty well shot as a dream for young people." When he came to Stanford from North Dakota in the mid-1970s it was like going from black-and-white to color. But his much younger brother is not nearly so infatuated. He sees a workaholic environment, unaffordable housing, "and if he's representative, we haven't seen the bad effects yet."

More people now move from California to other states than vice-versa. The population is still slowly growing—but purely as a result of foreign immigration. California is now a high-tax state, with an unemployment rate to match (8.3 percent, compared to 6 percent nationally). Its state and local government debt now exceeds $130 billion, dwarfing that of any other state, and it has been downgraded by Moody's and Standard and Poor's. Local investors will nonetheless gobble up the tax-exempt municipal bonds, thanks to what the *Wall Street Journal* calls "the state's very high tax rates."

California is supposed to balance its budget, but doesn't. One ruse is to count as revenue a phantom sum of money, now over $3 billion a year, that state officials pretend the federal government will soon fork over in return for imposing illegal-immigrant costs on the state. Congress has no intention of paying the money. But the fictitious revenue means that officials in Sacramento see no need to cut spending. So the debts increase, and are covered each year by rising short-term borrowing. It's all too reminiscent of New York.

Politically, the big event this fall is the gubernatorial contest between Gov. Pete Wilson and State Treasurer Kathleen Brown. There's also a Senate race between Congressman Michael Huffington and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, but it's hard to summon up much enthusiasm about either race. If it starts on schedule, the O.J. Simpson trial will preempt all the airtime, anyway. The old phrase "voter apathy" has begun reappearing in the press. One reason may well be that there is not a great deal to distinguish the candidates. Neither of the Democratic women is a radical, exactly, and Wilson and Huffington are Republicans of decidedly "moderate" hue. You have to wonder, when they went into politics, what drew them to one party rather than the other.

Like President Bush before him, Wilson has spent more capital distancing himself from conservatives in his own party than challenging the principles of the opposition. This illustrates the great political asymmetry of our time: liberals see no enemies to the left, conservatives no friends to the right. Wilson seems to feel that if only the Republicans weren't so hobbled by their allies on the right, most Californians of good will would vote Republican. This notion was put to the test in 1992, when both California Senate seats were open. The GOP candidates were Wilson's hand-picked successor, a nonentity called John Seymour; and an undisguisedly conservative talk-show host, Bruce Herschensohn. Both faced the same electorate on the same day. Both

Tom Bethell, The American Spectator*'s Washington correspondent, is a visiting media fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

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BY GARY BENCIVENGA

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lost, but Herschensohn received half a million votes and five percentage points more than Seymour.

Before that, of course, Ronald Reagan and George Deukmejian governed the state far more conservatively than Wilson, and both were easily re-elected. Wilson's race is now considered close. He made the mistake, early in his term, of raising taxes by an amount equal to half the deficit, imagining that the Democrats would do the decent thing and make up the other half with spending cuts. He badly underestimated their ideological fervor—an error comparable to Bush's repudiation of his "no new taxes" pledge in 1990. Wilson's tax increase seemed at first to have been a fatal error, dooming him to a single term. But President Clinton just may be unpopular enough to save him. I agree with John Kurzweil, the publisher of *California Political Review*, who thinks that such external considerations dominate state politics when there isn't a great deal to choose between the candidates anyway. (By the same token, of course, Herschensohn was very unlucky to have run against Barbara Boxer in the Bush-battered year of 1992.)

The one important issue that does separate the candidates is immigration. Last fall, Kathleen Brown said that illegal immigrants—the Census Bureau estimates there are 1.3 million of them in the state—are "wrongly seen as a cause" of the state's problems, and Wilson promptly attacked her for that. He supports a proposition on the ballot this fall (Prop. 187) that would require the state to provide only emergency medical care to illegals and to close welfare loopholes. School districts would have to determine the legal status of students, "in order to ensure the enrollment or attendance only of citizens," or of people in the country legally.

Kathleen Brown opposes the proposition, which seems to be popular. The Department of Finance estimates that the taxes of 700,000 working Californians are required to cover the costs of services to illegals in the state. In March, nonetheless, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly defeated (329-79) a proposal merely to document the number of illegal immigrants in U.S. classrooms. Pete Wilson has been derided as an "immigrant basher," but he pinpoints an absurdity that is hard to defend: "We say you may not enter the country illegally, but if you do, the following benefits are available to you."

Proposition 187 is of course bitterly opposed by the major news media in the state. The *San Francisco Chronicle* says that it "threatens the health and prospects of the Golden State by allowing only emergency medical treatment," thereby exposing everyone to "the risk of infectious diseases going untreated and hordes of youngsters loitering on state streets with nothing to do and little hope for the future." Only taxpayer-provided benefits can give people hope for the future, evidently. Prop. 187 neatly exposes the collectivist faith of those who oppose it.

About 18,000 illegal aliens are incarcerated in California prisons—15 percent of the prison population. The authorities are reluctant to expel them, because they know the liberated cons will be back across the border in no time. The *Los Angeles Times* interviewed one Mexican who "promised to return to the San Fernando Valley and resume his career of crime" following deportation, and even allowed himself to be photographed for the article. These inmates have the right to criminal counsel at public expense, to judicial appeals, including the appeal of deportation. But they can't *be* deported if their country of origin refuses to take them. The state spends over $500 million a year to lock up illegals, and the number of deportable felons in federal prisons more than doubled between 1988 and 1993.

After the Los Angeles earthquake in January, the Federal Emergency Management Agency immediately mailed out checks to people who hadn't even requested them, and bureaucrats boldly declared that they didn't care whether the recipients were "legal" or not. That was too much even for the U.S. Congress, which amended the relief package to exclude illegals. "This issue speaks to meanness, it speaks to immigrant bashing," said Rep. Jose Serrano, chairman of the congressional Hispanic Caucus. "Immoral," said another Hispanic Caucusian.

One thing is clear: government agencies want as many clients as they can get, without bothering about the legal niceties. Los Angeles school officials have denounced attempts to defund undocumented students, the Department of Motor Vehicles resisted asking clients to prove their legal status when seeking a driver's license, county registrars grumbled about toughening up voter registration, even after it came out that the accused Mexican assassin of presidential candidate Luis Colosio had twice illegally registered to vote in Los Angeles County; and San Francisco's Social Services Commission will just plain say no to implementing Prop. 187, if it passes.

Most strikingly, the U.S. Department of Education has issued a "legal opinion" stating that if Prop. 187 does go into effect, California school districts will lose $2.3 billion in federal aid. Federal bureaucrats thereby threaten reprisals on voters who seek liberation from central edicts. They are behaving just like judges. Every week in California one reads of some new judge who has found a pretext to take the law into his own hands, thereby winning praise from the editorial writers. Sacramento has been trying to cut back on the state's high welfare payments, for example, but judges state and federal, thirsting for admiration, block all cuts with cant about "extreme hardship."

Although Wilson can hardly be blamed for capitalizing on liberal disdain for the law, Kathleen Brown is surely right in one key respect—illegal immigrants are not in fact the cause of California's problems. When government officials throw taxpayers' money out of the window, it makes no sense to blame those who gather beneath to retrieve it. The high estimates of the heavy burden imposed on the state by illegal immigrants—$18 billion, according to the economist Donald Huddle—are totally unreliable. Most immigrants really do come here to work, and most illegals have jobs that Americans refuse to take.

The insistence by liberals that taxpayer-provided benefits should be made available to anyone who makes it across the border shows what a bizarre and extreme movement liberalism has become. It is also having the unfortunate effect of undermining support for all immigration. And this shows how destructive and divisive the welfare state has become. Not only has it undermined and demoralized many native-born Americans; it is now providing a pretext for nativists to sound like budget balancers when what they really want is to keep out foreigners. ❐

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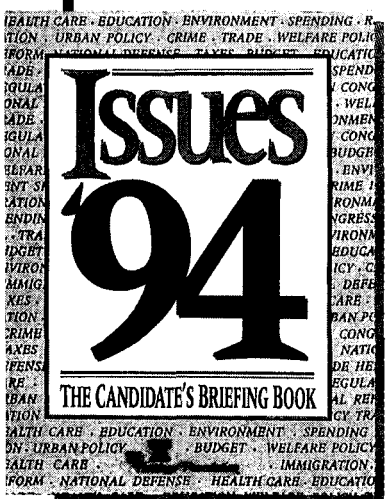

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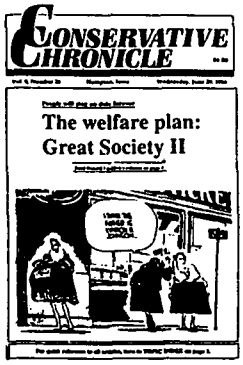

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Lloyds of Clinton

Lloyd Cutler and Lloyd Bentsen's unseemly cooperation in suppressing investigations into the Washington phase of Whitewater is only one of many new facts emerging in the wake of this summer's hearings—all of them suggesting that we ain't seen nothing yet.

by David Brock

"I smell a rat here."
—Rep. Toby Roth (R-Wisc.)

Assuming that Hillary Clinton's fears about the independent counsel "poking into 20 years of public life in Arkansas" are not misplaced, the major revelations of the Whitewater scandal are yet to come. Nonetheless, White House claims that the so-called Washington phase of Whitewater has received a "clean bill of health" should not go unchallenged.

Time and again during this summer's House and Senate hearings, Clinton officials, led by White House counsel Lloyd Cutler, took the witness stand and said that no laws or ethical rules were broken in the White House–Treasury contacts on Whitewater. If nothing else was clear after the dust had settled, the Clintons' efforts to thwart the investigation have soiled the reputations of everyone whose help they have engaged. Cutler used to be regarded as a Zeus-like figure in Washington, but he has now been exposed as just another well-heeled hired gun.

The Two Lloyds

Acting, incongruously, as both advocate for and judge of his client, Cutler did not behave as if the Clintons were innocent. In violation of a House rule requiring that written testimony be submitted to the committee 48 hours prior to a witness's appearance, Cutler handed over his report on White House contacts 30 minutes before he was to begin testifying. This ensured that the questioning would be soft. During a break, the man who insisted that he was not a special pleader for the president, but rather was representing the institution of the presidency, was seen on the dais reserved for members and staff, whispering with administration point man

David Brock is the author of The Real Anita Hill *(Free Press), recently issued in paperback, and an investigative writer for* The American Spectator.

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Rep. Barney Frank, the Massachusetts Democrat. One upstart committee member admonished Cutler to return to the witness table.

Cutler posed as Mr. Openness, making a big point of Clinton's having waived executive privilege, yet behind the scenes he was achieving unprecedented control over the flow of information to Capitol Hill. Contrary to Cutler's suggestion, executive privilege is very rarely asserted. Rather than denying information to the Congress, prior White Houses have always negotiated with Congress to make even highly sensitive documents available to some select group of members or staff.

Cutler, however, simply withheld certain information by routinely redacting out portions of documents that he deemed "non-responsive." In civil litigation, if a document is deemed responsive in part, the entire document is held to be responsive. When documents are denied and motions to compel are brought, judges assess the merits of such claims in camera. Cutler achieved a kind of super-executive privilege through the back door, with no check or means of appeal. Whether recently dismissed independent counsel Robert Fiske operated with the same White House filter is not known.

Cutler simply withheld certain information by routinely redacting out portions of documents that he deemed "non-responsive." In civil litigation, if a document is deemed responsive in part, the entire document is held to be responsive.

Before testifying, Cutler importuned treasury secretary Lloyd Bentsen—supposedly a subject of the ongoing investigation—to supply him with copies of interviews White House staff had given to the inspector general of the Treasury Department, which provided raw data for a separate Office of Government Ethics review. Bentsen had the Treasury official phoned at home on a Saturday night and ordered to fork over the material. This gave the White House lawyer time to iron out any bothersome inconsistencies in the testimony, and it violated Bentsen's own instruction to Treasury officials not to be in contact with the White House during the investigation. The two Lloyds also set up their two probes to run simultaneously with the congressional hearings, leaving the House and Senate committees competing with the White House and Treasury for access to witnesses. As a result, certain key witnesses were still being interviewed by committee lawyers as the hearings were proceeding.

More Sham

The House was outgunned by the Senate. The upper body, for example, had former Treasury counsel Jean Hanson in for twenty-six hours of depositions, while the House interviewed her for less than six hours. To make matters worse, banking committee chairman Henry Gonzalez had appropriated no funds for the investigation, nor had he hired a lawyer for the majority. And unlike their Senate counterparts, House members had difficulty developing a line of questioning because Gonzalez limited each member to five-minute intervals. Gonzalez and Frank defended the gavel-pounding with constant references to the five-minute rule, conveniently ignoring that the original concept of the rule was to ensure junior members the chance to get into the game. That is, the rule was conceived as a minimum, not a maximum, and certainly not as a way of frustrating the process.

How could it be that thirty House Democrats and eleven Senate Democrats could look at the same set of facts so differently? With the exception of Rep. Eric Fingerhut of Ohio, House Democrats treated the hearing with derision and a cavalier attitude bordering on contempt, while the Senate treated the matter with the utmost gravity and seriousness. The low point of the entire two weeks was of course achieved in the House, when Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters of California took up a line of questioning designed to show a panel of White House aides as God-fearing, hard-working, well-intended people. ("I understand you even attend church regularly?" Waters asked presidential counselor Mack McLarty.)

Bentsen's collusion with Cutler foreshadowed his thoroughly dishonorable conduct on the stand. Though Bentsen, former deputy secretary Roger Altman, Bentsen chief-of-staff Joshua Steiner, and Hanson provided conflicting accounts of their roles in the White House contacts, Bentsen was the only one of the four to escape grilling by both the committee and the inspector general. Two days after Bentsen, in an interview, denied knowledge of a February 2 meeting at the White House attended by Altman and Hanson, the IG received Bentsen's calendar log showing meetings with his two subordinates on February 1 and 3. Yet the IG didn't go back and ask Bentsen about these logged-in meetings. In the hearing, Bentsen flatly denied being briefed about the White House–Treasury contacts, despite testimony and memoranda from Altman, Hanson, and Steiner indicating that he had been.

The question of his own candor aside, however, as the head of an embattled organization, Bentsen had the duty to either forthrightly defend his subordinates before the committee, or concede that the criticism leveled against them was correct. Instead, the cowardly Bentsen was permitted by the Senate and a deferential press corps to step out of the line of fire and disassociate himself from the controversy.

The Ethics "Report"

Cutler, therefore, was left to brandish the Office of Government Ethics report issued on the eve of the hearings, but it generally escaped notice that the OGE report examined only the conduct of the Treasury Department officials, not of the White House staff. He merely lifted the OGE's

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analysis of the behavior of implicated Treasury officials and grafted it onto the conduct of the White House staff that he was supposedly evaluating. Contrary to impressions, there was no independent review of the White House staff. (Nor was there consideration of White House ethics policies that set a standard above the OGE's. Those policies say that on investigative or regulatory matters, contacts must go through the White House counsel's office; at a minimum, White House aides George Stephanopoulos—who improperly brought the FBI into Travelgate—and Harold Ickes broke those rules. For more on Ickes, see sidebar on p. 27)

Close observers know that if there is a way of construing a set of facts so that there is no violation, OGE will unfailingly protect executive branch officials, unless their name is spelled Sununu. In fact, among the documents obtained by Senate investigators was a White House copy of a March 3 Bentsen statement to the press announcing the OGE review, the day before Fiske subpoenaed White House officials on the contacts. At the bottom someone scrawled, "Mack, Per Joel, 'This will cover us so we don't have to do anything further'—P." The notation appears to be a message to chief of staff Mack McLarty from deputy White House counsel Joel Klein. (McLarty had a personal secretary named Patsy.)

Once it was completed, Cutler deployed the report to great effect with the public, never tiring of pointing out that the head of OGE, Stephen Potts, is a Republican. He did not add that Potts also likes his job.

The most familiar ethics rule prohibits government employees from using their office for financial gain. Although it is obviously irrelevant to the Washington phase of Whitewater, both Cutler and the Treasury IG spent the bulk of their time explaining why that standard was not violated. The two relevant rules say a government official should not improperly use nonpublic information to further his own private interest or that of another, nor should an official act partially or give preferential treatment to any individual.

Let's take just one contact—the infamous September 29 meeting between Hanson and White House lawyers Bernard Nussbaum and Clifford Sloan—as an example of the OGE's approach. On the first standard, the OGE found that the criminal referrals were indeed "nonpublic," but it went on to argue that Hanson's disclosure served "an official interest" rather than a private one. On the question of whether the disclosure constituted preferential treatment for the president, the report concluded that it did not, noting, "There was an assumption here, arising from the unique nature of the Office of the President, that the contacts were made pursuant to a proper White House function."

The sticking point in the report is that all of the contacts involving the president are regarded on their face as "official," and if there are only "official" interests, there can be no violations. Yet distinctions between a president's official and private interests and actions are recognized all the time: Otherwise, the Justice Department would be representing Clinton in the independent counsel's inquiry on Whitewater and the Paula Jones case. Certainly Hanson had no official purpose in mind when she later attempted to get RTC general counsel Ellen Kulka to brief the Clintons' private attorney on the referrals.

Once one dislodges this false notion, the Hanson disclosures could be construed both as preferential treatment for Clinton and as use of nonpublic information to further his private interests. RTC vice president William Roelle testified that to his knowledge the RTC had never before provided insider notice of criminal referrals. The disclosures arguably put the president in a better position with respect to his personal liability or exposure in an investigation of events that occurred before he became president.

What if Hanson's contacts with the White House (which she says were either ordered by or known to the president's friend Altman) were intended not for the "proper White House function" of answering press calls—as the OGE report *assumes*—but to allow Clinton to alert others targeted in the referrals, talk to witnesses, shred documents, and the like? The report was designed so that this possibility could not even be explored. For example, Hanson and deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes met on February 2. The IG asked Ickes what information he received at the meeting, and what he immediately did with it. Ickes answered that he passed it on to Clinton, but since Ickes's conduct was not being evaluated, he wasn't asked for details of the conversation.

Nonetheless, in a later section of the report, the OGE managed to undermine its own key assumption. Of a September 30 phone call from Hanson to Sloan, the OGE said:

> Mr. Sloan's notes would suggest that information other than that contained in the press inquiry from Ms. Schmidt [of the *Washington Post*] may have been conveyed by Ms. Hanson. . . . Ms. Hanson's disclosure of information other than that relating to the President would seem to go beyond what was necessary to achieve her stated purpose of assisting the White House with its press function.

Hanson, for example, disclosed that Arkansas Gov. Jim Guy Tucker was named in the referrals, which the press was then unaware of.

A related bit of evidence was unearthed in an unsworn interview with House investigators. White House staff secretary John Podesta (who was not interviewed for the OGE report) revealed that he remembered that in a meeting with Nussbaum on March 1, Nussbaum said that he had briefed White House aide Bruce Lindsey on the referrals back in September, following the contact with Hanson, because Lindsey handled press calls on Arkansas matters. Yet Nussbaum failed to instruct Lindsey not to tell Clinton, suggesting an ulterior motive.

According to the Cutler chronology, Lindsey then asked the counsel's office whether it was legal for the White House to be getting the information Hanson was providing. Cutler testified that Hanson's information "was coming to her [Hanson] from the press," not through regulatory channels. But why would

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White House Plumber

"This is not Watergate."
—Harold Ickes, Associated Press, March 11, 1994 (referring to the Whitewater scandal)

In making analogies to Watergate, White House deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes—whose broad portfolio includes not only Whitewater damage control but also 1994 campaign strategy and health care reform—appears to know what's he talking about.

Episodes in Ickes's pre-White House legal career have generated headlines and ethics questions in New York for years: his representation of union boss Anthony Amodeo, who allegedly had ties to organized crime; his dual role as David Dinkins's mayoral campaign lawyer and lawyer-lobbyist for companies seeking city contracts from the Dinkins administration; and his work for the city's Off-Track Betting Corp., plagued by allegations of political patronage; among other matters. (A White House appointment for Ickes was delayed a year while his ties to Amodeo's union were investigated. Ickes joined the staff in January.)

According to federal financial disclosure forms filed by Ickes in April, his colorful client list at the Long Island firm of Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein included former *New York Times* executive editor Max Frankel, Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, *Penthouse*, the Children's Defense Fund, feminist author Letty Pogrebin, and Kgosie Matthews (the boyfriend of Senator Carol Moseley-Braun, who was accused of sexual harassment by Braun campaign workers). Ickes even represented POM Inc., the Arkansas parking-meter manufacturer owned by former associate attorney general Webster Hubbell's father-in-law Seth Ward. It was Hubbell's representation of POM on favorable terms that led the Rose Law Firm to investigate its former partner's billing practices. Hubbell resigned in the hubbub.

A lawyer, of course, can't be held responsible for his clients' crimes, let alone their ethics, associations, or personal peccadilloes. But Ickes, who has been very active politically over the years in New York, can be judged by his own personal conduct, quite apart from his legal advocacy. It is in this respect that a heretofore unknown incident from Ickes's past may be an illustration of how he came to be a leading member of the Whitewater White House 10, not to mention giving his new boss Leon Panetta ample reason to watch his back.

The year was 1970, and Harold Ickes, then 31, was the campaign manager for the Democratic ticket of Arthur Goldberg for governor and Basil Patterson for lieutenant governor. (Patterson and Ickes would later become partners at Meyer, Suozzi.) One early Saturday morning on September 18, a New York City policeman was patrolling his beat in a radio car when he spotted a man he remembers as unkempt and shabbily dressed, emerging from the Goldberg-Patterson campaign headquarters at 667 Fifth Avenue at 53rd Street in Manhattan.

The man was Harold Ickes, according to the officer, John Mackie. Now retired from the police department and living in Florida, Mackie has come forward with this vignette after all these years because, he notes, it relates to a man "whose motives have been questioned by the Justice Department in the Whitewater investigation."

As Mackie tells it, that evening in New York twenty-four years ago, Ickes was alone and the streets were empty at about 1:45 a.m. The description of events is contained in pages from Mackie's police department memorandum book entry summarizing the events, which he supplied.

Spotting the approaching patrol car, Ickes, who was carrying a large brown paper bag tucked under his arm, hurriedly crossed Fifth Avenue and scampered down West 53rd Street. Officer Mackie called for Ickes to stop, but the plea was ignored by Ickes, who only picked up his pace. The officer gave chase and eventually caught up to him. "When I caught up to subject, he refused to identify himself, was very evasive to questioning, and failed to give a reasonable account of his conduct," the memo book entry said.

At this point, Mackie took possession of the paper bag and emptied its contents: thirty-four different keys, numerous checkbooks and registers, a number of telephone and address books—all written in a different hand, as Mackie recalls it—plus a large, three-cell flashlight of the type that Mackie says is commonly used in the commission of burglaries.

When Mackie informed Ickes that he would have to be taken into the 17th Precinct station house for further investigation, Ickes "began to harass me by calling me a lousy f---ing cop." Mackie then forced Ickes into the back seat of his car and delivered him to the precinct detective squad.

During forty-five minutes of questioning to which Mackie was not privy, Ickes eventually identified himself as the campaign manager for Goldberg-Patterson and supplied the police with the name of another campaign official who could vouch for him. According to Mackie's memo book, she was Sarah Kovner at TR-7-3915. (Kovner still has the same telephone number; she did not return a call seeking comment, nor did Ickes.)

Apparently, Ickes had undertaken a surveillance operation against his own campaign. "Though my superiors probably had no recourse at the time but to release the man," Mackie says now, "I was convinced then and remain convinced today that Harold Ickes was engaged in some clandestine action that he would not want known, perhaps not even by Arthur Goldberg or Basil Patterson." He adds: "This incident occurred pre-Watergate, but had it occurred afterwards, there's no doubt that my superiors would have looked more closely at the matter, probably by conducting a follow-up investigation."

—DB

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Lindsey have been concerned about the legality of getting a heads-up on information gleaned from press inquiries, which he had no intention of acting on? More plausibly, Lindsey may have wanted to know whether he legally could have nonpublic information coming from inside the RTC that was far more detailed than that which the press could have conveyed, and that reached well beyond a simple heads-up for dealing with press calls.

The clearest indication that the disclosures were not made pursuant to an "official function" is that the information was never actually used for any official purpose—neither to brief the press, nor, as Cutler testified, to keep the president from "embarrassing or compromising encounters" with those targeted in the probe. Neither Nussbaum nor Lindsey shielded the president from twice meeting with Tucker, a subject of the referrals, on October 6 and again on November 18. Clinton had been told by Lindsey of the referrals before the first meeting, but Lindsey denied telling Clinton that Tucker was named.

In the end, the report's conclusions are hedged to such an extent that they are virtually worthless. "On the basis of our review," the OGE said, "we believe that you might reasonably conclude that the conduct detailed in the report of officials presently employed by the Department of the Treasury did not violate the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch." The implication, of course, is that one might reasonably conclude that the conduct *did* violate the standards.

Fiske concluded emphatically that Whitewater played no role in Foster's suicide. Yet according to those who have seen it, the Fiske deposition of Bill and Hillary Clinton shows that he didn't ask the first couple if they had spoken to Foster about Whitewater before his death.

Fishy Fiske

A second component of the administration's defense was the deification of special counsel Robert Fiske, who had concluded that no laws were violated in the White House–Treasury contacts. As with the ethics report, that conclusion should be subject to closer scrutiny, because Congress and the Treasury inspector general were almost certainly able to develop a more complete picture of the contacts than Fiske did.

As congressional investigators deposed various witnesses in preparation for the hearings, they discovered that some witnesses had never been interviewed by Fiske, and some lines of inquiry had not been pursued in the interviews that Fiske did conduct. Among several witnesses deposed by the Senate, but not interviewed by Fiske, was Joan Logue-Kinder, Treasury's assistant secretary for public affairs. The Senate was able to uncover the fact that Logue-Kinder had called RTC public affairs director Steve Katsanos in October 1993 for information about reporters' inquiries on the Rose Law Firm's representation of Madison Guaranty. Logue-Kinder then instructed Katsanos to brief Hillary Clinton's press secretary, Lisa Caputo.

Fiske also failed to interview Ben Nye, who was Altman's special assistant after Steiner left his office to join Bentsen's staff. And Senate investigators, not Fiske, unmasked the sequence of contacts between the White House, including the president himself, and Eugene Ludwig, the comptroller of the currency. Clinton asked Ludwig for advice about Whitewater at the December 1993 Renaissance Weekend, and Ludwig secretly funneled copies of reporters' FOIA requests on Whitewater to Bruce Lindsey.

Senate investigators are quick to concede that the press of time meant that they, too, were unable to depose all of the potentially relevant witnesses. For example, they didn't depose John Bowman, a Treasury attorney who worked for Hanson and had extensive responsibilities for the RTC beginning in 1993 and ending with the appointment of Ellen Kulka as RTC general counsel in early 1994. Bowman was physically on site at the RTC during the entire period under investigation. He rebuffed Hanson during a January 1994 meeting when she asked RTC officials to provide her with copies of the Whitewater criminal referrals so that Altman could fend off Republican demands that the deadline for filing civil charges in the Madison case be extended by announcing that the case was closed.

The upshot is that new independent counsel Kenneth Starr will want to take a fresh look at the series of contacts—provided that the full court press by Clinton lawyer Robert Bennett questioning his independence does not intimidate Starr, who is said to be susceptible to liberal media pressure, into accepting Fiske's judgment.

What About George and Bruce?

Though the media focused heavily on Altman and Hanson, the two most promising areas of further probing on criminal obstruction of justice charges, according to congressional investigators familiar with the evidence, involve Bruce Lindsey and George Stephanopoulos. Belying the Cutler line that no wrongdoing occurred since the investigation was not in fact influenced, the statute proscribes not only a successful obstruction but also any *endeavor* to obstruct, provided there is corrupt motive.[1]

After learning of the referrals, Lindsey spoke by telephone on October 4 or 5 with Denver lawyer James Lyons, who had authored a false report for the Clinton campaign to deflect reporters' questions about Whitewater. In this conversation, Lindsey learned that reporters were asking questions about who had endorsed checks written on Madison Guaranty

[1] There is a technical legal question about whether the RTC's civil investigation constituted a "pending proceeding" under the criminal code. As a general matter, courts of appeals have broadly construed the term "proceeding" to include preliminary inquiries by agencies.

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accounts to the Clinton gubernatorial campaign that were at issue in the referrals. As he was being questioned during the Senate hearing about this call, Lindsey flashed a satanic grin and referred to contemporaneous written notes of the conversation that he had failed to surrender in the Senate's document request; nor is it clear that Fiske had them. The Senate did not depose Lyons. Copies of FBI interviews with Lyons supplied to Congress indicate that Fiske did not question him about his contacts with Lindsey.

After an October 14 meeting with Treasury Department public affairs director Jack DeVore about the checks, Lindsey testified, he called the custodians of the campaign contribution records in Little Rock and requested copies of them. Two months later, when the *Washington Post* was finally able to break the story about the fishy checks, Susan Schmidt reported that "former Clinton campaign aides said they would not make their own records from the 1984 campaign available." Clinton aide Betsey Wright was quoted as saying she was "unable to locate" copies of post-election contribution reports required to be filed by state law. The originals had disappeared from the county clerk's office; Wright said she "probably forgot" to file them. Did someone in Arkansas take the checks and other evidence and deep-six them?

The problem for Stephanopoulos involves his discussions with Steiner and Altman about Jay Stephens, a Republican former prosecutor who was hired by the RTC in mid-February 1994 to pursue the civil case against Madison. Though he was able to portray these two contacts as his sole role in the controversy, largely unnoticed evidence was developed in the House that Stephanopoulos had

(continued on page 82)

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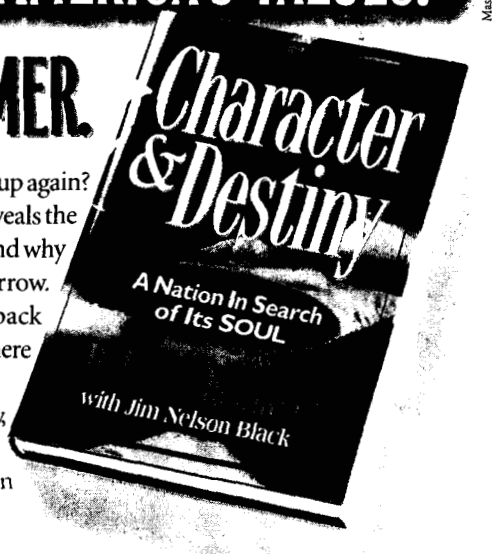

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Matt Labash

Buy George

Is that what top people at NationsBank were thinking when they gave Clinton aide George Stephanopoulos an exceptional $668,000 loan?

In May, with the help of a $668,000 loan from NationsBanc Mortgage Corp. (a NationsBank subsidiary), George Stephanopoulos bought an $835,000 D.C. building containing a posh apartment above an eyewear retail store. Gossips, realtors, and all manner of investigative reporters immediately began asking: How could someone who pulls down a mere $125,000 a year—with a net worth between $30,000 and $100,000—afford such pricey real estate? "Stephanopoulos got a great deal," says one source in the banking world. "They waved it in front of him. The only thing he did wrong was he should've known NationsBanc wasn't giving him this deal because he was Joe Schmoe off the street. He was given this deal because of who he was."

A Jack Anderson column claimed Stephanopoulos had received a three-year adjustable-rate mortgage at a 6.375 percent interest rate (locked in until June 1, 1997)—a commercial loan carrying a rate dangerously close to NationsBanc's prime residential rate of 6.25 percent. (The industry rule of thumb is that commercial loans average about two points higher than the prime rate.)

Stephanopoulos's realtor, Giorgio Furioso, did nothing to quash suspicions. "George made out like a bandit," he told Anderson. "I'm not trying to toot my own horn here, but I did a terrific deal. . . . Nobody making $125,000 could qualify for the property without the commercial property [lease]. George would never have bought a $600,000 home. This is a way for him to buy something without raising eyebrows."

But on the day of the Anderson column, NationsBank issued a statement that the loan Furioso was bragging about hadn't been a commercial loan at all:

> The loan described by Jack Anderson as a commercial loan to George Stephanopoulos was, in fact, a residential mortgage loan. At the time the loan commitment was made, Mr. Anderson . . . could have walked into any NationsBanc Mortgage Company office in the D.C. area and received the same excellent rate and term for the same deal. That's why people come to us first for loans, no matter where they work.

Two weeks later, another Anderson column said Stephanopoulos and Furioso now claimed that it *was* a residential loan he had received. Stephanopoulos later pled ignorance: "I just told him [Anderson] to talk to Furioso, I actually didn't know what it was. I just knew it was a legitimate loan, which it is."

Matt Labash is a reporter for The American Spectator.

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Stephanopolous's Bethesda-based NationsBanc lending agent, Greg Bush, declined to be interviewed for this story. When Stephanopoulos was asked if any exceptions had been made on this loan, he replied, "Nope. Everything was done by the book."

When NationsBank spokesperson Lynn Drury was asked the same question, she replied, "The review and approval process was completely unremarkable and totally within standard NationsBank policies and procedures."

Not according to any NationsBank policies we found.

Residential Versus Commercial Loans

Stephanopoulos did indeed receive a residential loan, and it's not hard to see why the earlier story of a commercial loan would have been easier for the public to swallow. For it is unlikely that a residential loan would be available at all on a mixed-use commercial property—particularly when the resident, by his realtor's own admission, could not have qualified for the loan without counting the rent collected from the retail entity as income.

One Nations source confirms that the issuance of residential loans on mixed-use properties is such a rarity, it isn't even addressed in either the "NationsBanc Mortgage Corporation's Program Summary" or its "Credit Policy Manual." "Doing a residential loan on a commercial property is something they would normally not do," the source says. "They'd only do it for the deepest-pocket, influential types, but I can't even remember seeing exceptions made for them."

Another Nations source adds, "If I took an application for a residential property, and was told that it also had commercial use, I'd be told that I couldn't do the loan, so I'd end up referring it to the bank [NationsBank] and have a commercial officer do the loan—and commercial rates would be involved."

Although no mention of mixed-use properties was found in the residential policy guide, a NationsBanc underwriting memo reveals that one of the three restrictions applying for residential lenders doing a loan on mixed-use properties is that "the borrower must be the owner of the business entity." The Eye Gotcha optical shop on the ground floor is owned not by Stephanopoulos, but by a Robert McAlare. [1]

Furioso, who could not be reached for comment for this article, told Anderson that he had shopped the loan to at least four other banks, in a quest to "play one bank off another." One of the lenders who dealt with Furioso says, "When Furioso quoted the rates to us from NationsBanc, we said that was just outside of competition. We told him if you've got that good a deal, then you run with it. . . . That property is what is called a mixed-use and would only qualify for a commercial loan at any bank that I know of. I'm almost positive that Fannie Mae underwriting guidelines would not allow that to be called residential."

The Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae") is the largest purchaser of residential mortgages on the secondary market. Its underwriting guidelines are looked upon as industry standards. NationsBanc adheres to Fannie Mae guidelines on all loans up to $203,151, and the vast majority of its larger ones, according to a Nations source. The guidelines are not obligatory in the case of the Stephanopoulos loan, since Fannie Mae does not hold the note. All the same, says another Nations source, "The NationsBanc 'Credit Policy Manual' tracks very closely with Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac guidelines—you don't want to create a whole lot of new underwriting rules."

Stephanopoulos later pled ignorance: "I just told him to talk to Furioso, I actually didn't know what it was. I just knew it was a legitimate loan, which it is."

Those guidelines are as follows: "[If] we purchase or securitize mortgages that are secured by properties that have a business use in addition to their residential use—such as a house in which day care is provided or one that includes a professional office—we have special eligibility criteria for them." One of these criteria reads: "It must be a single-family dwelling."

A Fannie Mae senior underwriter describes the Stephanopoulos purchase as "basically a two-unit property because you've got the commercial downstairs and the residential above. It's not a single-family property, so we wouldn't have taken it." Even if it were a single-family house, says the underwriter, the rental income could not have been used to help the buyer qualify, as it was in Stephanopoulos's case.

One banking source provided an indicator of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the terms of Stephanopoulos's loan. The source claims the property's listing agent, Jane Roth of Pardoe Realty, said she contacted NationsBanc and was told that NationsBanc had no appetite for mixed-use properties. When she found out they were going to do the Stephanopoulos loan, the source says, Roth went back to them to ask why they were suddenly interested in mixed-use properties. They said, "We're not, but we do have an appetite for this particular loan."

Roth denied the story but later conceded she had had several potential buyers. "I had people with cash," she said, "who could've bought the building. They made decisions not to buy for many other reasons." Roth would not confirm whether her prospective buyers—she said there were fewer than five—withdrew of their own volition or were disqualified by the bank, and she declined to provide their names. A Nations spokesperson claimed not to know, either. →

[1] McAlare, who shared financial information with both NationsBank and Furioso in the course of the deal, is interestingly enough a former commercial banker. Of the Stephanopoulos deal, which he generally defended as a sound investment, he says, "It's a celebrity loan for sure. It's fun to have it in the office if you're a banker, to say, 'Wow, we just did the deal for Stephanopoulos'—but not by throwing the book out. The pure residential rate might have been based on who he was, but the decision to do the deal was based on the value of the property."

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Terms of Qualification

Leaving aside the issue of whether a residential loan could be made on such a property, myriad discrepancies still arise if, as all parties claim, no exceptions were made or preferential treatment given.

Stephanopoulos (or Furioso on his behalf) obtained a 25-year mortgage on the $835,000 property with 80 percent ($668,000) being lent to him by NationsBanc. A second trust was taken out with the previous owners, John and Miriam Fisher Reno (no relation to Janet), for $83,500 at 8.5 percent. with a balloon making the entire balance due on June 1, 2001. (Until then, his payment is an additional $642 per month.)

NationsBanc's "Program Summary" details exactly what kind of loan Stephanopoulos received and the exceptions that were made. Nations designates loans between $650,001 and $1 million as an "AS3 Super Jumbo Loan Amount." Its "Conventional Program Matrix" specifies that cumulative loan-to-value ratios on Super Jumbo products are "70/90." The "90" means that both the first and second trusts together can make up no more than 90 percent of the total selling price—in other words, 10 percent must be put down, as was done in this case. (Stephanopoulos did put 10 percent down, although approximately $60,000—or 72 percent—of that 10 percent was a gift from his father. When asked exactly how much he did put down, Stephanopoulos retorted, "That's none of your business. I put down my money.") But the "70" means that the "first mortgage"—the actual NationsBanc mortgage—can account for only 70 percent of the total selling price. Instead, the bank lent him $668,000 or 80 percent, $83,500 above its own stated limits.

Eugene Ludwig was also—until his appointment in 1993—a partner with the Washington law firm of Covington & Burling, where for a long time he represented Hugh McColl and NationsBank. Now he is NationsBank's primary regulator.

Loan guidelines are not passed down by banking regulatory agencies, so it is NationsBanc's prerogative to cut any deal it deems appropriate. But this is hardly in keeping with "standard procedures." As one Nations source said, "Going from 70 to 80 percent would be a pretty big exception." Another banking source calls the slide "pretty unorthodox, especially in a large bank where they adhere very closely to their policies."

Super Jumbo guidelines also list various restrictions that apply, one of them requiring loans to be on "single-family detached properties only." I wasn't able to find a single interpretation of this guideline that met the criterion. As mentioned above, none of the Nations sources interviewed thought of the purchase as a "single family dwelling." And as a turn-of-the-century row building with shared walls, neither is it "detached."

A third key guideline violated was the qualifying-debt ratio. Debt ratios are calculated by dividing principal, interest, taxes, and insurance (PITI) by gross monthly income. The Super Jumbo product lists a qualifying ratio of "28/36." The front ratio (28) means that, for a customer to qualify for a particular loan, his mortgage payment should not exceed 28 percent of his gross monthly income. The back ratio (36) indicates the maximum long-term debt, including the mortgage payment, should not exceed 36 percent of the customer's gross monthly income. (Maximum long-term debt is calculated by adding in car payments, school loans, net losses on other rental properties, etc.)

One source with knowledge of Stephanopoulos's financing revealed that he was qualified at a "39/47" ratio—11 points over the maximum allowance. Stephanopoulos's principal-and-interest payment is $4,458.35. The D.C. Department of Finance and Revenue confirms that property taxes on this building are $12,629.10 a year, although Eye Gotcha owner Robert McAlare said he pays "a couple hundred a year in property taxes." Assuming that shaves a bit from the total, Stephanopoulos still pays at least $1,000 a month in taxes. Using conservative insurance quotes of about $50 a month, Stephanopoulos principal-and-interest payment, taxes, and insurance would add up to approximately $5508.35. McAlare confirms that he pays rent to Stephanopoulos of "about $5,500" a month, so, as was claimed, he would effectively cover Stephanopoulos's payment.

But for qualifying purposes, Stephanopoulos's second mortgage payment to the Renos of $642 a month is factored into the equation. Adding that to his monthly payment, his total PITI is approximately $6,150.35, which is then divided by his gross monthly income. (When Stephanopoulos was asked if this was his total payment including the second trust, he said, "I don't even know. I assume so.") He makes $125,000 a year ($10,416.67 a month) plus the rental income of approximately $5,500 per month for a gross monthly income of approximately $15,916.67. Divide that figure into $6,150.35 and his front ratio is rounded to 39 percent.

The back ratio, or 47, contains undisclosed debts that can be computed by subtracting 39 from 47. Multiplying his monthly income ($15,916.67) by 8 percent, we find that he has approximately $1,273.33 of additional qualifying debt over his two mortgage payments.

One real estate source marvels at the 11-point slide. "You see people occasionally slide a few points on those qualifying ratios," he says, "but after fifteen years in this business, I've never seen somebody slide that much."

A Nations source concurs. "Ratios are not cut in stone," he says. "There are due reasons to exceed the ratios if you have other compensating factors like extra money, good job stability, good credit—but you don't exceed them by that much. I don't think I've ever seen a loan approved with those ratios."

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Stephanopoulos's qualifying ratio exceeds the maximum allowable ratio by approximately $1,750.83 a month—and that's including the rental in Stephanopoulos's gross monthly income. Keep in mind that for qualifying purposes, even though his interest rate is 6.375 percent, an artificial rate of 7 percent is used by NationsBanc when qualifying customers. That would bump his ratio approximately one more point to 40, which would then exceed guidelines by approximately $1,910 per month.

The Scale of the Slide

As Stephanopoulos's realtor said, "Nobody making $125,000 could qualify for the property without the commercial property [lease]." It is now apparent that he didn't qualify even *with* the commercial lease. Without it—and remember that Nations sources don't think it should be counted on a residential loan—his numbers are off the charts. Dropping the rental income would make his gross monthly income $10,416.67. Divide that into his PITI along with the second trust amount, and his approximate qualifying debt ratios are an astronomical 59/67—a full 31 points over the maximum qualifying ratio, or $3,229 over the monthly mortgage payment guidelines.

Another sticking point with one Nations source is that Stephanopoulos was given a 25-year instead of a 30-year mortgage, which would have been a special request. When asked about the 25-year mortgage, Stephanopoulos said, "Listen, Furioso did it. This is a standard loan for this kind of a deal as far as I know." (Not according to our Nations source, who estimates that 85 percent of Nations loans are 30-year mortgages, 10 percent are 15-year mortgages, and 5 percent are "other.")

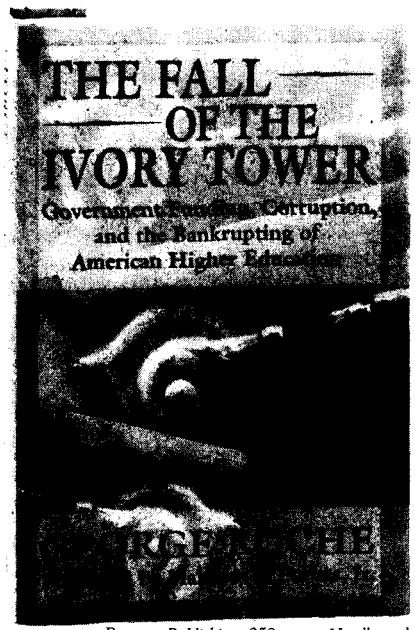
By opting for the 25-year package, Stephanopolous added $287.24 per month to his payment. One possible motive is that if his payment had been much lower than the rental income drawn from the optical shop, he would have shown a profit and had to pay taxes. When asked if this was his reasoning, Stephanopoulos said, "No, that's just the way it's done."

It still rankles the lending community. "Not only did NationsBanc lend him the money based upon higher-than-normal ratios," says one Nations source. "They also gave him a 25-year mortgage when it's normal to give people a 30-year mortgage. That added about $300 a month of extra debt. Thirty years would've brought his ratios down about two points. He didn't qualify for a 30-year mortgage, much less a 25."

Hugh McColl and the Ludwig Connection

While there is no evidence suggesting Stephanopoulos directly sought a favorable loan (Stephanopoulos said Furioso handled the negotiating; "I just filled out the forms"), he and Hugh McColl, the owner of the Charlotte, North Carolina–based NationsBank, are not without mutual entanglements. McColl has frequently been identified as Clinton's banking swami, and was once referred to by Clinton as "the most enlightened banker in America."

Heading the third largest bank in the country, and regularly called "the most influential banker in America," McColl was rumored to be up for consideration as treasury secretary. A for-



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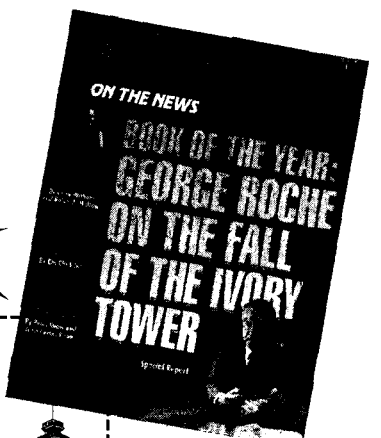

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mer Bush and Perot supporter, he now dines at the White House, attends ball games with the president, and has put his seal of approval on everything from NAFTA to Clinton's economic plan. He was a high-profile participant at Clinton's Little Rock economic summit.

McColl described his politics to Charlie Rose earlier this year by saying, "I'm a very big supporter of President Clinton." When asked about political ambitions, McColl said, "I would like to be in public service of some type."

Rose followed with, "Cabinet, maybe, or—".

"No one's ever offered me that job," McColl responded.

At a White House ceremony last summer to unveil Clinton's community-development lending program, McColl was the only commercial banker who spoke. "It's an honor to speak today on behalf of the banking industry," he said, enraging small bankers who saw it as another of his ploys to win Clinton's approval on lifting restrictions on "branching."

McColl is one of the biggest proponents of interstate branching, which would allow banks to acquire institutions across state borders. Under current law, bank holding companies must maintain separate banks in every state. If such laws were lifted, behemoth banking entities would have a much easier time cornering combined commercial markets such as Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, where NationsBank already controls a 22 percent market share.

As it happens, there's an interstate branching bill on Capitol Hill right now, which just cleared the House and, pending Senate approval, will soon pass under Clinton's pen." (Stephanopoulos says of the bill, "I never worked on it—didn't know anything about it.") McColl stands to save millions through the bill's enactment. The *American Banker* reports, "If NationsBank could cut its annual costs as much as $5,000 a branch, that would be $10 million."

Another character in the Nations/Clinton cluster—and another prominent champion of interstate branching—is Comptroller of the Currency Eugene Ludwig, one of the most powerful and controversial regulatory officers in the federal government. Ludwig traces his Clintonian genealogy back even further than McColl. Appointed comptroller by Clinton in 1993, Ludwig was one of only two people (labor secretary Robert Reich was the other) who had both been a Rhodes Scholar and attended Yale Law with Clinton. When Clinton was embroiled in the Gennifer Flowers scandal and suffered a setback in New Hampshire, Ludwig offered his services, and for the rest of the year split time between the campaign and his law practice. With White House access unprecedented for a banking regulator, Ludwig was also—until his appointment in 1993—a partner with the Washington law firm of Covington & Burling, where for a long time he represented Hugh McColl and NationsBank.

Ludwig is now NationsBank's primary regulator, which would appear lucky for the bank. Rep. Henry Gonzalez has asked Ludwig to investigate NationsBank for deceptive sales practices, in violation of OCC guidelines and federal securities law. Rep. John Dingell has asked Ludwig to investigate whether NationsBank had violated federal regulations that prohibit "tying" banking products. In addition, both Nations and Ludwig are currently involved in a Supreme Court appeal that would uphold the power of national banks to sell fixed- and variable-rate annuities directly. Ludwig was most recently showcased in the Whitewater hearings, testifying about being buttonholed by Clinton at Renaissance Weekend last January to give Whitewater advice in what he called a thirty-second conversation.

This is not to suggest that Ludwig was involved in Stephanopoulos's real-estate transaction—only to illustrate the degree of cross-pollination between NationsBank and Stephanopoulos's boss.

While it may be premature to suggest quid pro quos, the *Standards of Ethical Conduct of Employees of the Executive Branch* speaks to comparable situations. The guidelines state, "An employee shall not, directly or indirectly, solicit or accept a gift: 1. From a prohibited source; or 2. Given because of the employee's official position." A gift is defined as "any gratuity, favor, discount, entertainment, hospitality, *loan*, forbearance or other item having monetary value." Excluded as gifts are "Loans from banks and other financial institutions generally available to the public."

Interpreting the exclusion, an Office of Government Ethics counsel said, "If it is a loan that's not on terms generally available to the public, then it potentially is a gift—it depends on whether it is given because of government position or from a so-called 'prohibitive source' that does business with the agency." Beth Nolan, chief ethics authority at the White House, was asked for an opinion on the Stephanopoulos loan; she said she would call back but did not.

A NationsBank source says bluntly, "This deal reeks of favoritism." A source with knowledge of the Stephanopoulos financing confirms that exceptions had to be signed off for final approval of the loan, saying, "In the Mid-Atlantic area, there's only about twenty names that could sign off on it, unless it came from higher." A NationsBank spokesperson says the exceptions were signed off on by "the appropriate NationsBank officers within the mid-Atlantic market." She would not comment further on whether Hugh McColl pushed it through himself. ❐

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P.J. O'Rourke

Fashionable Worries

If meat is murder, are eggs rape?

This is a moment of hope in history. Why doesn't anybody say so? We are no longer in grave danger of the atomic war which, for nearly fifty years, threatened to annihilate humanity and otherwise upset everyone's weekend plans. The nasty, powerful, and belligerent empire that was the Soviet Union has fallen apart. It's nothing now but a space on the map full of quarreling nationalities with too many *k*s and *z*s in their names—armed Scrabble contestants. The other great malevolent regime of recent days, Red China, has decided upon conquest of the world's shower flip-flop market as its form of global domination. The bad political ideas that have menaced our century—Fascism, Communism, Ted Kennedy for President—are in retreat. Colonialism has disappeared, and hence the residents of nearly a quarter of the earth's surface are being spared visits from Princess Di. The last place on the planet where white supremacy held sway has elected a president of rich, dark hue. Apartheid-style racism is now relegated to a few pitiful and insignificant venues such as the U.S. Senate (and, if you think Caucasians have any claim to genetic superiority, imagine majoring in U.S. Senate Studies).

Things are better now than things have been since men began keeping track of things. Things are better than they were only a few years ago. Things are better, in fact, than they were at 9:30 this morning, thanks to Tylenol and two Bloody Marys.

But that's personal and history is general. It's always possible to come down with the mumps on V-J Day or to have, right in the middle of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a piece of it fall on your foot. In general, life is better than it ever has been, and if you think that, in the past, there was some golden age of pleasure and plenty to which you would, if you were able, transport yourself, let me say one single word: "Dentistry."

We know the truth of these matters from stories we've heard in our own homes. Existence has improved enormously within the lifetimes of our immediate family members. My Grandfather O'Rourke was born in 1877 and born into a pretty awful world, even if we don't credit all of his Irish embroidery upon the horrors. The average wage was little more than a dollar a day. That's if you worked. O'Rourkes were not known to do so. The majority of people were farmers, and do you know what time cows get up in the morning?

P.J. O'Rourke is the author of numerous works and a member of the editorial board of The American Spectator. *This essay is adapted with permission from his new book,* All the Trouble in the World: The Lighter Side of Overpopulation, Famine, Ecological Disaster, Ethnic Hatred, Plague, and Poverty, *to be published in October by the Atlantic Monthly Press.*

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Women couldn't vote, not even incredibly intelligent *First Ladies* who were their own people and had amazing inner strength plus good luck playing the cattle futures market. (For all we know, Mrs. Rutherford B. Hayes had quite an eye for beef on the hoof.)

Without voting First Ladies, there was no health-care reform. Of course, there was also no health care. And not much health. Illness was ever-present. and the most trivial infection might prove fatal. The germ theory of disease as argued by Pasteur was just another wacky French idea with no more effect on the people of the 1870s than Deconstructionism has on us. Men customarily wed multiple wives, not by way of philandering but because of deaths in childbirth. The children died, too, sometimes before a suitable foot-long nineteenth-century name could be given them. A walk through an old graveyard shows our ancestors often had more dead children than we have live ones.

Pollution was unchecked and mostly unthought of. Sewage was considered treated if dumped in a river. Personal hygiene was practiced, when at all, on the face, neck, and hands up to the wrists. My mother's mother (from the indoor-plumbing side of the family) said that, when she was little, a hired girl had told her to always wear at least one piece of clothing when washing herself "because a lady never gets completely undressed."

Things are better now than things have been since men began keeping track of things. Things are better than they were only a few years ago. Things are better, in fact, than they were at 9:30 this morning, thanks to Tylenol and two Bloody Marys.

Everything was worse for everybody. Blacks could no more vote than women could and were prevented from doing so by more violent means. About 10 percent of America's population had been born in slavery. "Coon," "kike," "harp," and "spic" were conversational terms. It was a world in which "nigger" was not a taboo name, but the second half of "Beavis and Butt-Head" would have been.

Nowadays we can hardly count our blessings, one of which is surely that we don't have to do all that counting—computers do it for us. Information is easily had. Education is readily available. Opportunity knocks, it jiggles the doorknob, it will try the window if we don't have the alarm system on.

The highest standards of luxury and comfort, as known only to the ridiculously wealthy a few generations ago, would hardly do on a modern white-water rafting trip. Our clothing is more comfortable, our abodes are warmer, better-smelling, and vermin-free. Our food is fresher. Our lights are brighter. Travel is swift. And communication is sure.

Even the bad things are better than they used to be. Bad music, for instance, has gotten much briefer. Wagner's *Ring* cycle takes four days to perform while "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm" by the Crash Test Dummies lasts little more than three minutes.

Life is sweet. But you could spend a long time reading, going to the movies, and watching TV and not hear this mentioned. Especially, watching daytime TV. Of course, if you're watching a lot of daytime TV your life probably is dreadful. But, as I pointed out, that's your problem, not history's. History is on a roll, a toot, a bender. No doubt it will all come crashing down around our ears one day when a comet hits the earth or Sally Jessy Raphael becomes Chief Justice of the United States. But, in the meantime, we should be enjoying ourselves, and we are not.

I hear America whining, crybaby to the world. I behold my country in a pet beefing, carping, crabbing, bitching, sniveling, mewling, fretting, yawping, bellyaching, and being pickle-pussed. A colossus that stood astride the earth now lies on the floor pounding its fists and kicking its feet, transformed into a fussy-pants and a sputterbudget. The streets of the New World are paved with onions. Everybody's got a squawk. We have become a nation of calamity howlers, crêpe hangers, sour guts, and mopes—a land with the grumbles.

On the Fourth of July 1993, the lead story on the front page of the *Boston Globe* read:

> The country that celebrates its 217th birthday today is free, at peace, relatively prosperous—but deeply anxious. . . . the American people are troubled, beset by doubts, full of anger.

And any peek into the media produces examples in plenty of the same sobs and groans, often from improbable Jeremiahs.

In the April 24, 1994 issue of the *New York Times Book Review,* Fran R. Schumer made reference to "the modern era, when *anomie*, caused by any number of factors—the decline of religion and community, the anonymity of modern life gave rise to selfish, obsessive, 20th-century man." Ms. Schumer writes the "Underground Gourmet" column for *New York* magazine. All she was doing in the *NYTBR* was reviewing a book about food.

"In a world with the cosmic staggers, where the Four Horsemen . . . are on an outright rampage" began a profile of harmless comedian Jerry Seinfeld in the May 1994 *Vanity Fair.*

"Ecological ruin, shrinking white-collar job market and fear of intimacy confronting his generation" is how that journal of deep thinking, *People,* describes the subject matter of Douglas Coupland, latest young writer to complain his way to literary prominence. Coupland's first novel, *Generation X,* was a detailed account of how wretched and lousy life is for middle-class white kids born after 1960. "Our Parents Had More" is the title of chapter two.

In case you missed the point (or fell asleep while the plot ossified), Coupland included several pages of depressing statistics at the back of *Generation X.* For example, accord-

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ing to a Time/CNN telephone poll taken in June of 1990, 65 percent of 18-to-29-year-old Americans agree that "given the way things are, it will be much harder for people in my generation to live as comfortably as previous generations." Of course, it's difficult for these youngsters to know if they're going to live as comfortably as their parents did because the kids are so immobilized by despair over ecological ruin, shrinking white-collar job market, and fear of intimacy that they're all still living at home.

But William T. Vollmann—the youthful author of *An Afghanistan Picture Show, Whores for Gloria, Butterfly Stories,* and numerous other books (who has been acclaimed a genius by the sort of people who acclaim those things)—knows it will take more than a split-level in the suburbs to redeem our ghastly existences. "I'd say the biggest hope that we have right now is the AIDS epidemic," Vollmann told Michael Coffey in the July 13, 1992 issue of *Publishers Weekly.* "Maybe the best thing that could happen would be if it were to wipe out half or two-thirds of the people in the world. Then the ones who survived would just be so busy getting things together that they'd have to help each other, and in time the world would recover ecologically, too."

I hear America whining, crybaby to the world. I behold my country in a pet beefing, carping, crabbing, bitching, sniveling, mewling, fretting, yawping, bellyaching, and being pickle-pussed.

Maybe we should also take dope. *Listening to Prozac,* by Peter Kramer, spent six months on the *New York Times* best-seller list. An article in the May 5, 1994 "Drugs in America" special issue of *Rolling Stone* said, "Given the psychic condition of the nation today [heroin] may be just what the doctor ordered. 'With heroin,' as a former user points out, 'your life can be falling apart around you and everything's still fine with you.'"

But no. It's worse than that. Being and creation are so horrible, even heroin can't make them better. Otherwise Nirvana lead caterwaul Kurt Cobain would still be with us. And what a tortured cry of existential despair that was when Kurt took a twenty-gauge and splattered his brains, or whatever it was he had in his skull, all over the Cobain guest house.

"That was his message, that life is futile," a 26-year-old named Bob Hince told *Washington Post* reporter Jonathan Freedland. Freedland was writing a feature piece for the April 24, 1994 Sunday Show section titled "Generation Hex." He found Mr. Hince drinking in one of the Seattle bars where Nirvana got its start. "We all feel the monotony, we all feel we cannot control our circumstances," said Mr. Hince, who is clearly a spokesperson not just for his generation but for all of America and maybe for space aliens.

Freedland reported that "[Hince] has completed six years of study in molecular biology but is now headed for Alaska to work as a salmon fisherman. His dyed red hair nearly covers his eyes, falling behind the lenses of his retro, Buddy Holly glasses. . . . 'It's just ambivalence,' he says. 'What am I supposed to be?'"

Personally, I think Bob Hince won't have to worry about what he'll be if the people who paid for his six years of studying molecular biology get their hands on him. But, as Nirvana would say, "Never mind." The whole world is rotten. Everything stinks. Nobody loves me. Everybody hates me. My name is Legion. I'll be your server tonight. The special is worms.

Why are we so unhappy? Is it, as that Cassandra of food critics, Fran R. Schumer, would have it, "anomie" caused by "the decline of religion and community"? Sure. Going to church was always one of my favorite things to do. Zoning-board meetings are also a blast. And what is it with this anomie stuff anyway? We all know perfectly well we've got no idea what the word means. We might just as well say we're suffering from yohimbine or rigadoon or Fibonacci sequence.

Are we disheartened by the breakup of the family? Nobody who ever met my family is.

Are we depressed by lower expectations? Back in the sixties I expected Permanent Woodstock—a whole lifetime of sitting in the mud, smoking Oaxacan ditch weed, listening to amplifier feedback, and pawing a Long Island chiropodist's daughter who thought she'd been abducted by creatures from outer space. Show me somebody with lower expectations than mine.

Here we've got all this material well-being, liberty, and good luck, and we're still our crummy old selves—flabby around the middle, limited out on our VISA cards. The job is a bore. The house is a mess. And "Melrose Place" is in reruns. It's not our fault, it's life's. The world is an awful place so we're not much good either.

Fretting makes us important. Say you're an adult male and you're skipping down the street whistling "Last Train to Clarksville." People will call you a fool. But lean over to the person next to you on a subway and say, "How can you smile while innocents are dying in Tibet?" You'll acquire a reputation for great seriousness and also more room to sit down.

And worrying is less work than doing something to fix the worry. This is especially true if we're careful to pick the biggest possible problems to worry about. Everybody wants to save the earth; nobody wants to help Mom do the dishes.

Thus, in *fin de siècle* civilization, we find ourselves with grave, momentous concerns galore. The Clinton State Department has created a position of Worry-Wart-in-Charge, an "undersecretary of global affairs" who is to be responsible for "worldwide programs in human rights, the

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environment, population control and anti-narcotics efforts." Timothy E. Wirth, nominee for this dreary post, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Fussed Wirth, "Growth that is all-too-capable of doubling—even tripling—today's global population in the next century is already a force contributing to violent disorder and mass dislocations in resource-poor societies. Some of the resulting refugees are our near neighbors." Oh those massively dislocated Nova Scotians, breeding like mink. "Other refugees-in-waiting," said Wirth, "press hungrily against the fabric of social and political stability around the world." And that suit's going to have to go to the cleaner's.

The Parliament of the World's Religions, meeting in Chicago in 1993, issued a statement called "Towards a Global Ethic" that opined, "We must move beyond the dominance of greed for power, prestige, money and consumption to make a just and peaceful world." A just and peaceful world full of powerless nobodies who are broke and have empty shopping malls.

On Earth Day, 1994, the National Council of Churches suggested that Protestants make a "confession of environmental sins": "We use more than our share of the Earth's resources. We are responsible for massive pollution of earth, water and sky. We thoughtlessly drop garbage around our homes, schools, churches, places of work, and places of play." (Which is why Episcopalian neighborhoods are always such dumps.)

Everywhere we see the imposition of grave concern into the most mundane and trivial aspects of life. Lightning Comics, a Detroit publisher of funny books, has created a super hero, Bloodfire, who is HIV positive. Which should cool Lois Lane.

A TV revival of "Bonanza" had as its villain a man who wanted to strip-mine the Ponderosa.

Hanna-Barbera has a "Captain Planet and the Planeteers" cartoon about saving the you-know-what. Margot Kidder supplies the voice of "Gaia," the Spirit of the Earth. "I am worried about the planet for my daughter's future," announced Kidder in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune.* Kidder said her daughter had once told her, "Mom, when we grow up, the world may not be here."

The May 1994 issue of *Barbie* comics, featuring the adventures of the doll by that name, had a story about how deaf people are discriminated against. There was a page at the end where Barbie gave a lesson in sign language, showing us the signs for "push-up bra," "Let's go shopping," and "diamond tennis bracelet from middle-aged gentleman admirer." Just kidding. Barbie showed us the signs for "Friend," "Hello," "Thanks," and that sort of thing.

The April 1994 issue of *Washingtonian* ran an article by my friend Andrew Ferguson about corporate "multicultural training." Andy quoted one of the trainers (or facilitators, as they like to be called), whose job it is to instill "sensitivity" about age, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and the kitchen sink into employees of Washington businesses:

"It's a function of capitalism, isn't it?" says the facilitator. "Capitalism requires scarcity to function. It's built into the system—no scarcity, no profit.

"That's the kind of power relationships capitalism creates. Sharing power is not something a male-dominated culture naturally gravitates towards, is it?"

The facilitator, a male, was being paid $2,000 a day.

And here is my favorite tale of pained solicitude, from an AP wire story that appeared in the *Arab News* in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, and which I have been saving ever since:

> Game wardens and wildlife biologists were among those gathered for nearly eight hours on a farm in northwestern Louisiana to save what they thought was a bear 50 to 60 feet up in a pine tree. A veterinarian fired tranquilizer darts at the critter in an effort to get it down. Deputies and wildlife agents strung a net to catch the bear when the tranquilizers took effect. . . . "People really wanted . . . to help and protect that bear and get him where he was supposed to be," Norman Gordan, the owner of the farm said. . . . It wasn't until the tree was chopped down . . . that they discovered they were rescuing a dart-riddled garbage bag.

Some of the folks propounding the above-listed anxieties, cavils, and peeves are amateurs: New Agers who will believe in anything but facts, environmentalist softies who think the white rats should be running the cancer labs, or bong-smoke theorists who would have the world be as stupid as they are. But many of the fretful—the "multicultural training facilitator" is an appalling example—are pros. Professional worriers put our fears to use. Masters of Sanctimony have an agenda. The licensed and certified holier-than-thou work toward a political goal. And whether these agony merchants are leftists (as they usually are) or rightists (as they certainly can be) or whether they head off in some other and worse direction (the way religious fundamentalists do), the political goal is the same.

In fact, if we use the word *politics* in its broadest sense,

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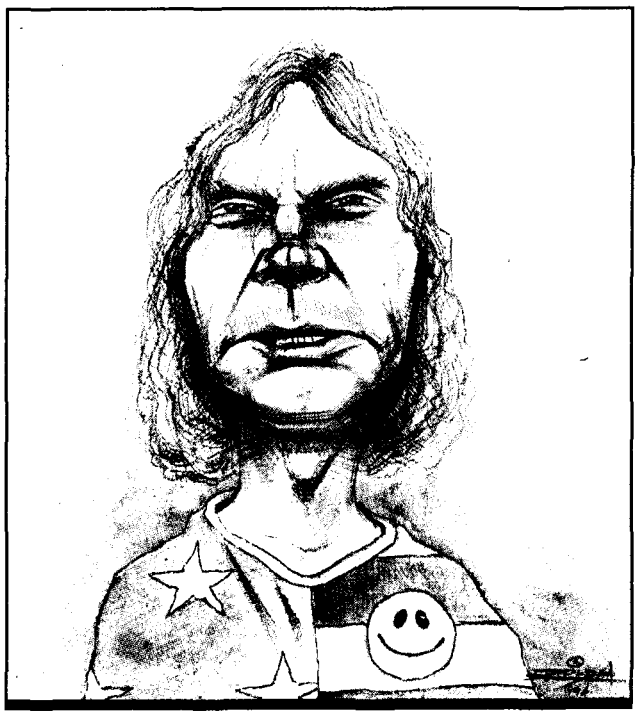
there really is only one political goal in the world. Politics is the business of getting power and privilege without possessing merit. A politician is anyone who asks individuals to surrender part of their liberty—their power and privilege—to State, Masses, Mankind, Planet Earth, or whatever. This state, those masses, that mankind, and the planet will then be run by . . . politicians.

Politicians are always searching for some grave alarm that will cause individuals to abandon their separate concerns and prerogatives and act in concert so that politicians can wield the baton. Calls to mortal combat are forever being sounded (though only metaphorically—politicians don't like real wars, too much merit is involved). The idea is that people will drop everything for a WWII. Remember the War on Poverty? And how Jimmy Carter asked Americans to respond to a mere rise in the price of crude oil with "the moral equivalent of war"? (What were we supposed to do, shame the gas station attendant to death?) Now we're "fighting pollution," "battling AIDS," "conquering racism," et cetera.



Ralph Nader is as much a politician as Senator Robert Packwood, even if Ralph isn't as smooth with the ladies. Such professional worriers as Al Gore, Paul Ehrlich, Jeremy Rifkin, Joycelyn Elders, Barry Commoner, Jesse Jackson, and Captain Planet want our freedom, on the grounds that they are better than us. (You may have noticed how politicians are wiser, kinder, and more honest than you are.) Because politicians worry so much about overpopulation, famine, ecological disaster, ethnic hatred, plague, and poverty, they must be superior people. And because they worry so much, they must be experts, too. (Said the Austrian political economist Friedrich Hayek, in his 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom*: "There could hardly be a more unbearable—and more irrational—world than one in which the most eminent specialists in each field were allowed to proceed unchecked with the realization of their ideals.")

The bullying of fellow citizens by means of dreads and frights has been going on since paleolithic times. Greenpeace fund-raisers on the subject of global warming are not much different than tribal wizards on the subject of lunar eclipses. "Oh, no, the Night Wolf is eating the Moon Virgin. Give me silver and I will make him spit her out."

The grave worries facing the world today mostly don't have solutions. That is, they don't have solutions outside ourselves. We can't vote our troubles away. Or mail them to Washington either. We can't give fifty dollars to the Sierra Club, read Douglas Coupland, and sing the *Captain Planet* theme song and set everything right. Instead we have to accept the undramatic and often extremely boring duties of working hard, exercising self-control, taking care of ourselves, our families, and our neighbors, being kind, and practicing as much private morality as we can stand without popping.

To the extent that our worries do have public, collective solutions, the solutions are quite simple. Though, like many simple things (faith, grace, love, soufflés), they are difficult to achieve. It was Thomas Robert Malthus himself, arguably the father of modern worrying, who set forth these solutions in the 1803 revision of his *Essay on the Principle of Population:*

> The first grand requisite to the growth of prudential habits is the perfect security of property; and the next perhaps is that respectability and importance which are given to the lower classes by equal laws, and the possession of some influence in the framing of them.
>
> We have been miserably deficient in the instruction of the poor, perhaps the only means of really raising their condition.

Property rights, rule of law, responsible government, and universal education: that's all we need. Though no society has achieved these perfectly. Our own nation is notably lacking on the fourth point. (And such things as huge federal regulatory agencies and the Menendez jury aren't helping items one through three.)

Let us seek out the worries but avoid the worriers. They are haters of liberty and loathers of individuals. They wish to politicize everything. Imagine Bill Clinton conducting your love life for you. And watch out, he may be trying to.

To quote Malthus again:

> The most successful supporters of tyranny are without doubt those general declaimers who attribute the distresses of the poor, and almost all the evils to which society is subject, to human institutions and the iniquity of governments.

We should wipe the gnostic smirk of self-righteousness off the faces of the moral buttinskis. Anyone who thinks he has a better idea of what's good for people than people do is a swine. Let's give the professional worriers something to worry about. (And memo to Generation X: Pull your pants up, turn your hat around, and get a job.) ❐

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James Ring Adams

April and Webb and Jean and Jack

The muzzling of the Kansas City Three is turning into the smoking gun of the Whitewater scandal.

"The RTC has been a political football since day one almost," said career bureaucrat William Roelle during the recent congressional Whitewater hearings. With these words, Roelle revealed one of the most dangerous implications of the Whitewater affair. The Resolution Trust Corporation, set up in 1989 to clean up the wreck of the savings and loan industry, is now the pawn of the political mindset that produced the disaster. Bill Clinton has succeeded in reducing a crucial part of the federal civil service to the standards of corrupt one-party Arkansas. Roelle would later confirm that his boss Roger Altman, at the time both acting head of the RTC and deputy treasury secretary, had laid down guidelines for cases when "there were high-profile individuals affiliated with failed S&Ls." As one of the senators paraphrased Roelle's deposition, "[Altman] said he didn't want to read it in the paper." One of these "high-profile" figures turned out to be Clinton's Navy secretary John Dalton, who had sailed through his confirmation without a public whisper about his nefarious role in a failed Texas thrift and his expectation of a $750,000 "finder's fee" for setting up a meeting with regulators.

Another career bureaucrat, RTC corporate communications director Stephen Katsanos, told Senate investigators that Clinton's friends had consistently undermined the regulators' independence, supposedly guaranteed by statute, to suit their own agenda. In his words, blunt by bureaucratic standards, "The RTC was certainly much more political and there were activities undertaken that were of much more concern to the career staff than there had ever been before." Since the Bush White House had also drawn harsh and well-deserved attacks for its own interference, Katsanos was making a weighty statement. But the record bears him out.

Almost as soon as the hearing ended, Katsanos drew the distasteful duty of explaining why his superiors had decided to investigate not the senior lawyer accused of trying to manipulate the Madison investigation, but the career regulators in Kansas City who had kept the case alive. In mid-August, the RTC placed the three main Madison investigators on career-chilling administrative leave. According to one report, two supervisors were evicted from their office by security guards. The third, the lady who kept Washington from burying the criminal referrals on Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan, checked into the hospital with a stress-related ailment. As we shall see, the disciplining of

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the Kansas City Three is perhaps the most ominous result of Whitewater to date. Ominous, because it involves not the coddling of political cronies but the intimidation of the civil service to protect none other than Bill and Hillary from investigations into the looting of the Madison S&L.

The Rise of April Breslaw

The regulators involved in the muzzling of the Kansas City Three have a history going far back in the Whitewater affair. One such involvement dates to April 30, 1985, when the Rose Law Firm wrote the Arkansas Securities Department in support of Madison's plan to issue preferred stock. On July 10, it submitted arguments for Madison's effort to buy a brokerage house as a financial subsidiary. Both letters named Hillary Rodham Clinton as a contact person. Neither plan took effect, because Madison couldn't meet the Securities Department precondition that it raise more capital. The Rose presentation relied on an audit by the accountants Frost & Co. showing that Madison was in good shape, but this detail seemed forgotten in 1989 when a federal regulator hired Rose to pursue Madison's accounting malpractice suit against Frost.

When the FDIC took over the savings and loan crisis in February 1989, it put career attorney April Breslaw in charge of the Madison Guaranty case. Regulators had been hoping to recover some of the S&L's losses by suing its accounting firm, Frost & Co. When the firm that had filed the suit was disqualified on conflict grounds, Breslaw called Webster Hubbell. Hubbell may or may not have mentioned something about the firm's previous work for Madison—which would have disqualified Rose from this lucrative account. Another Rose partner says yes, Hubbell did raise the earlier work; Hubbell himself said that at the time he didn't know about the securities work himself. Rose took on the case in April.

Two months later, an FDIC attorney in Little Rock learned that the files had been delivered to Webb Hubbell. Upset by the news, he wrote to Breslaw in Washington that Hubbell's father-in-law, Seth Ward, had recently won a judgment for nearly half a million dollars in fees he said he was owed by Madison Guaranty. "Mr. Hubbell was present at the trial of the Seth Ward matter," wrote the attorney, "and appears to have been an interested (indirectly) participant in the Ward proceedings." Hubbell's brother-in-law, Seth Ward II, was also pressing a claim on Madison.

When Breslaw rejected her fellow attorney's concern, another FDIC agent appealed to his superior. He warned that the Ward suit would raise questions about Madison's day-to-day operations. "We are making this information available, in detail, to Mr. Hubbell," he said. "To believe that none of this information will make it back to his family is naive."

Breslaw's response was that Hubbell did not represent Ward and would shortly send a letter saying so. She added that neither was he the primary attorney on Frost. "On both sides then," she wrote, "Hubble [sic] is involved only in an indirect way. . . . On these facts, I am not inclined to take a $10,000,000 case away from counsel that has obtained fine results for me on other matters." Breslaw prevailed at the time, and an RTC report earlier this year exonerated Rose of a conflict of interest. But the report contained devastating revelations. Contrary to Breslaw's assertion about Hubbell's indirect role, the fee bills, said the report, showed that he "performed a significant amount of work." The contradiction led the Rose Firm to investigate Hubbell's billing, and he resigned as third man at Justice, he said, to defend himself against its complaint of fee padding.

The Rose legal bills also tell a story about federal regulation. Reconstructed from FDIC files this January (because the RTC's file for "Madison Legal Bills" was found to be empty), they show more frequent contacts between Breslaw and Hubbell than she seemed willing to acknowledge. The ten months of available bills—about a year's worth appear to be still missing—show 283.25 hours charged to Hubbell for a total of $37,392.82. His notations show nine conference calls and six letters to Breslaw, identified toward the end as "April." (This list apparently excludes cover letters for the bills, which Hubbell signed and addressed "Dear April.") Breslaw signed the approvals for the bills and sometimes sent cover letters to the managing agent for Madison urging payment "as promptly as possible." By the end of the case, Rose submitted bills for $400,879.55 and obtained a settlement with Frost for $1,025,000.

These bills were all addressed to the Professional Liability Section (PLS) of the FDIC, Breslaw's permanent employer. When the RTC started its own PLS program in 1991, Breslaw transferred to the thrift agency, intending to return to the FDIC when the RTC expired in 1995. Then this February, she fell into a controversy more intense than the Rose case, in an incident that takes on added interest in light of her apparently friendly professional relations with Hubbell.

Fear and Loathing at the RTC

Some bureaucratic background helps explain the outrage that followed. The Professional Liability Section, sitting in the third tier of the RTC's legal bureaucracy, took some of the heaviest political pressure in this highly politicized agency. Its mission was to go after the "deep pockets"— the lawyers, accountants, and outside directors who profited from the failing S&Ls and still had the resources to make restitution—a mission that targeted many "high-profile individuals." A separate Office of Investigations assisted PLS lawyers, but tensions between the two units reached such a point in some regions that they barely spoke.

Coincidentally or not, the RTC went through a series of disruptive and badly managed reorganizations. In August 1992, an impressive array of senior lawyers took their careers in their hands and complained to Congress that punitive transfers and petty harassment were driving experienced lawyers out of the PLS and seriously disrupting its lawsuits. Just before the presidential election, an all-Democratic panel of the Senate Banking Committee held a day-long hearing on the turmoil, trying to elicit charges that the Bush administration was trying to protect its political cronies. The bureaucrats resisted specific accusations, but they powerfully conveyed the picture of a demoralized,

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poorly managed agency, severely hampered in the effort to recover S&L plunder for the taxpayer.

Congress mandated another PLS reorganization, and when acting RTC chief John Ryan carried it out in April 1994, he made several interesting changes. He centralized the PLS field staff under a senior officer in Washington and gave PLS control of the Investigations staff as well. This move came just two weeks after Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa) first made the charge that Washington was trying to curb the RTC Kansas City office in its investigation of Whitewater.

Going to Kansas City

The Rose Law Firm was very much on Breslaw's mind last January. As Whitewater burgeoned in the press, the Frost suit was under investigation in another part of the RTC, ominously entitled the Office of Contractor Oversight and Surveillance. Breslaw began writing e-mail memos defending herself and complaining about the inquiry. On January 12, she singled out what she thought was the source of her torment, the investigations staff of the Kansas City office. Noting that the FDIC already had the case under review, she said, "I suggest that Investigations discontinue its inquiry into this matter."

The Rose firm's legal bills also tell a story about federal regulation. Reconstructed from FDIC files this January (because the RTC's file for "Madison Legal Bills" was found to be empty), they show more frequent contacts between April Breslaw and Webster Hubbell than Breslaw seemed willing to acknowledge.

The early morning of February 2, she boarded a flight to Kansas City, her first and only visit to the RTC office at the Country Club Plaza. Breslaw says she was gathering documents on the civil investigation of Madison. At the end of the day, she sat down for a chat with Laura Jean Lewis, who until the previous November had conducted the Kansas City office's criminal investigation of Madison. This talk has become the Smoking Gun of Whitewater, evidence of Washington pressure on field investigators to reach a comfortable conclusion about Madison.

The encounter brought together two distinctly different kinds of bureaucrats. Breslaw, the Washingtonian with the law degree, had risen rapidly through turmoil at the Professional Liability Section. In eight years as a bank regulator, she received five promotions and now held the GS-15 classification, toward the top of the civil service scale. Top officials at the RTC called her by her first name. Houston-born Lewis, daughter of a professional soldier who rose through the ranks to brigadier general, grew up on a series of Army bases. Street-smart and notoriously tough, she learned about the savings and loan industry the hard way. In February 1986, she took a secretarial job at Western Savings Association in Dallas, one of the most crooked thrifts in Texas. The S&L collapsed eight months later, but Lewis stayed on to help the FBI and IRS sort through its millions of pages of files. In 1988, federal rescuers merged Western with seven other hard-case thrifts, and Lewis rose through the wreckage from secretary to assistant vice-president. In 1991, encouraged by agents who had worked with her, she joined the RTC. Her first assignment was to investigate failed thrifts in Arkansas.

Her role in reviving the Madison case has been previously reported (see *TAS*, April-May 1994). It was fully in character that Lewis, already famous for her assertiveness, was tenacious in tracking the disappeared criminal referrals on Madison and in making new ones. After some pointed exchanges with Paula Casey, the U.S. attorney in Little Rock and former law student of Bill Clinton, Lewis was taken off the Madison case in November 1993. Her now famous meeting with Breslaw was almost an afterthought, but it has produced such repercussions that it may mark a turning point in the integrity of thrift regulation. Both Lewis and Breslaw have refused to talk to the press, but the Whitewater hearings produced a wealth of new detail about the chat, including a more or less verbatim transcript.

Breslaw told Congress she had no intention of meeting Lewis on her trip. Her host was Richard Iorio, the field investigator for the Madison case. During the morning, she complained to the committee, she saw him showing his staff a letter written to some congressmen the day before by Roger Altman, then acting chief of the RTC. It discussed the impending expiration of the statute of limitations on S&L cases. "I thought it was inappropriate," she said, "for Mr. Iorio to alarm the Kansas staff by using the letter to emphasize the growing tension between the RTC and Congress."

During lunch, Iorio offended her further by offering her an alcoholic drink. He also "prodded" her to talk to Lewis. By the time Breslaw told the tale to Congress, she portrayed these attentions as a plot to induce her to talk freely. Iorio may have left her alone in Lewis's office, she speculated, because "he was aware that one or more of his employees' offices were 'bugged,' but did not want his own voice recorded." Lewis further lulled her, said Breslaw, by offering her a seat on the sofa. As they talked, Breslaw did not know that a tape recorder was running.

In her testimony, Breslaw dismissed the talk as "Ms. Lewis freely expressing her views and ideas about the criminal matters on which she had worked." A *Wall Street Journal* reporter, apparently working from a sloppy transcription distributed by House Democrats, said the tape appeared "to undercut the notion" that Breslaw pressured Lewis. Breslaw did say, he noted, that her superiors wanted "honest" answers.

Both accounts miss the point. Lewis was trying to give

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Andrew Cuomo and Other Protected Pals

Other S&L entanglements besides Madison have cropped up throughout the Clinton administration, and in case after case, regulators have made borderline decisions that tend to protect the Pals of Bill. One such pal is Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo, son of New York Governor Mario Cuomo and welfare state crown prince.

So it may be no accident that even a member of the House Banking Committee can't get thrift regulators to acknowledge their run-in with the governor's son. The incident dates to young Cuomo's fling at deal-making in 1987, under the tutelage of New York developer Sheldon L. Goldstein, a fund-raiser for both the governor and Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato. Andrew Cuomo was attorney and co-investor in the takeover of a North Miami Beach thrift called Oceanmark Savings and Loan. The deal turned into a nasty fight. Oceanmark's founders, the Fenster family, accused Cuomo's New York group of planning an illegal change in control and a looting of its assets. One Fenster claimed that Goldstein threatened to take a razor to his family. In April 1990, hours before the thrift's lawyers had scheduled a deposition of Cuomo, the New York group proposed a settlement, allowing Oceanmark to buy back its stock.

The issue died for about a year, until a bank officer learned in a chance remark from an examiner that, even before the settlement, federal regulators had ordered Cuomo, Goldstein, and the rest of their group to *give up* their Oceanmark stock. The cease-and-desist order said that if they hadn't sold their shares before a six-month deadline, they should donate them to the Oceanmark treasury. This was highly interesting news to Oceanmark officers, who wondered if they were buying back stock they already owned. They began to pester the Office of Thrift Supervision (which supervises the savings and loans that survived the debacle) to see a copy of the enforcement order. For more than three years now, the regulators have refused.

In March 1993, Oceanmark enlisted the help of its congressman, a member of the House Banking Committee. He too drew a stout denial from the OTS. The OTS decision is at least consistent with the RTC's refusal to provide Whitewater documents to the ranking Republican on the committee, Rep. Jim Leach, but it puzzles Oceanmark's lawyers. They argue that the thrift needs access to the order to conduct its own business, such as issuing stock prospectuses. The issue of confidentiality, they say, is moot now that an unofficial copy of the order has made its way into court papers. Is the OTS so set on keeping this secret, they ask, because Andrew Cuomo was one of Clinton's first appointments?

Clintonites can retort that this insistence on confidentiality started in the Bush administration. But in the case of Sunrise Savings and Loan, a policy shift early in the Clinton administration may save a politically powerful Philadelphia law firm (and other law firms) from a devastating indictment.

Sunrise, a go-go thrift in Boynton Beach, Florida, was one of the first prominent S&L disasters; when it failed in 1985, taxpayers had to cover losses ranging from $650 million to $1 billion. But there was an unusual twist to the Sunrise saga. The thrift was founded and directed by Philadelphia's second largest law firm, Blank, Rome, Comiskey and McCauley. Lawyers from Blank, Rome took Sunrise stock public, making it one of the hottest plays on Wall Street in the early eighties. Egged on by senior partner Michael Foxman, the firm set up a West Palm Beach office to handle loan closings, and raked in fees with each deal. The firm ultimately paid a near-record $40 million civil settlement to federal regulators.

But the issue of *criminal* charges wasn't settled until the first months of the Clinton administration. The Justice Department's fraud section gave the go-ahead for indictments of Foxman and two other senior Blank, Rome partners and an associate, but turned down the prosecutors' pleas to go after the law firm itself. The acting U.S. attorney for south Florida argued that corporations had been brought to trial for less, but main Justice decided that law firms, as decentralized collections of partners, had to be judged by looser standards. The decision stunned field investigators.

In a March 1993 indictment, the line prosecutor contrived to mention Blank, Rome as an unindicted co-conspirator, but the damage was done. A legal newsletter, the *DOJ Alert*, said the decision could help get other law firms off the hook even though it wasn't a formal precedent. The Justice Department refuses formally to announce the ruling.

The scent of political protection has surrounded the Sunrise case from the beginning. Criminal charges against the lawyers never made it past a Bush appointee at the fraud section. But there are equally circumstantial questions about the pass for Blank, Rome.

The decision not to prosecute Blank, Rome, said the *DOJ Alert*, was the work of career bureaucrat Gerald McDowell, chief of the Justice Department's fraud section (the same section that buried the original criminal referrals on Madison Guaranty, naming Bill and Hillary Clinton as beneficiaries of a fraud). According to one internal memo, the fraud section bureaucrat who got the Madison file said he "didn't want to deal with it."

McDowell's decision was ratified by acting assistant attorney general John Keeney, a longtime Justice veteran whose name is familiar to students of canceled investigations dating back to the mid-seventies. It was the time, notes the *DOJ Alert*, of the Zoë Baird flap, and Justice had no attorney general for weeks. But even this sharp observer fails to notice that in the interregnum, the prevailing power was Hillary's crony and former Rose Law Firm colleague Webster Hubbell, and that Rose had its own involvement with Sunrise Savings.

In a February 1989 letter soliciting business from bank regulators, the Rose Firm listed work for Sunrise Savings as part of its experience. The firm told the FDIC that it had handled a foreclosure and sale of a project as a subcontractor to the Sunrise receivership. This letter, which achieved notoriety for its non-mention of the firm's work for Madison Guaranty, was signed by Vincent Foster, Jr. Although Blank, Rome was not listed as the lead counsel for Sunrise in this case, the break it got from Webb Hubbell's Justice Department certainly deserves further scrutiny.

—JRA

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the barely interested Breslaw an overview of her investigation. It didn't start with Whitewater at all, Lewis said, but with the discovery of a check-kiting scheme through several other land developments. The trail of overdrawn checking accounts and loans led in and out of at least twelve of James McDougal's entities, and Whitewater Development Co. was part of the path. It was hard to give any hard numbers for Whitewater's impact, said Lewis, "because you're trying to isolate one microbe out of an amoeba." This wasn't the analysis that Breslaw apparently wanted, and twice she made the point, "If they could say it honestly, the head people, Jack Ryan and Ellen Kulka, would like to be able to say Whitewater did not cause a loss to Madison."

After listening to a long discourse on check kites, Breslaw said, "I don't believe at all and I don't want to suggest at all that they want us to reach a certain conclusion. I really don't get that feeling but they'd be happier about it because it would get them off the hook about Whitewater. That's why I think we keep getting asked these same things."

The indirect nudge raised Lewis's hackles. "April," she said, "I think I understand what you're saying there, and I'll tell you what my perspective is on it. I will produce whatever answers are available and file them up to whoever needs them." But as far as a "politically correct response," she said, "I'm not going to do anything to facilitate that."

This stab in the back exceeded any previously recorded betrayal of field staff by their Washington chiefs. Regulators in the past had bent to congressional pressure, but they had never before thrown one of their own to the wolves at a public hearing.

As Lewis plunged in, the tone took a sharp turn for the worse. She started to argue that McDougal's business partners, including Bill and Hillary Clinton, *must* have known that his S&L was in trouble. Breslaw quickly demurred. "I don't know the insolvent thing," she said. "I can't accept it."

But Lewis pressed her theory of collective responsibility. "Here we're dealing with people like [now–Arkansas Gov.] Jim Guy Tucker and Hillary Clinton," she said. "They are attorneys. They have more sense than that. You don't turn a blind eye to your business investments, and if you're not putting money in, you have to wonder where the money is coming from that's making the real estate payments."

This argument horrified Breslaw, who had spent two years working on the Madison accounting malpractice case. In her later congressional testimony, she singled out these "implausible suspicions about the Clintons" as damaging Lewis's credibility: If the outside auditors said Madison was profitable, how could Clinton have known otherwise?

It might have been unusual to carry this debate into a congressional forum, but Lewis was in for much worse. Much as Rep. Leach, the ranking Republican on the House Banking Committee, praised the courage of the Kansas City investigator, congressional defenders of Clinton prepared to turn its August 5 Whitewater hearing into a determined assault on her credibility. Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-Penn.) prepared a background sheet of derogatory personal information and released the rough draft of a retention agreement between Lewis and her lawyer.[1] Responding to this "character assassination," Lewis's lawyer, Michael Forshey of Dallas, charged that the letter, "a personal, confidential and privileged communication," had been sent to the committee by John Ryan, Roger Altman's successor as acting RTC head. RTC spokesman Katsanos did not deny the charge, but he failed to explain coherently why the head of an agency would choose to relay intercepted copies of an employee's private correspondence to a congressional committee.

This stab in the back exceeded any previously recorded betrayal of field staff by their Washington chiefs. Regulators in the past had bent to congressional pressure, but they had never before thrown one of their own to the wolves at a public hearing. Yet, worse was to follow. In mid-August, a day before angry senators forced the resignation of deputy secretary Altman, the RTC placed Lewis and her two supervisors on administrative leave. Lewis, Iorio, and Lee O. Ausen, supervisor of the Kansas City investigators, were ordered to leave their offices for about two weeks, Katsanos confirmed, while an ad hoc team from Washington looked into "certain issues" raised about their conduct.

No one else was ordered to leave, Katsanos said, raising an interesting question about Hubbell's legal fees. The FDIC Legal Division report that supposedly cleared the Rose Law Firm of conflict in the Madison case also noted the discrepancy between Breslaw's downplaying of Hubbell's role and the large number of hours that he billed. Such a statement about the apparent misuse of taxpayer money would call for an investigation that might target the bureaucrat who signed the questionable bills and then let them disappear. An FDIC spokesman confirmed that the billing fell in the purview of an ongoing inspector general's investigation of Rose that was originally due to conclude in May.

Furthermore, no one but Lewis's lawyer raised public questions about the conflict between Breslaw's congressional testimony and her statements in Kansas City. In the field, she said she was acting on behalf of Ryan and Kulka. But she denied it to Congress, and said she had never even met them

[1] Kanjorski and others pointed to a mention of royalties as proof that Lewis was looking for a book deal. In an angry letter, her lawyer explained that she drew revenue from a slogan she had marketed for T-shirts and coffee mugs, featuring a megillah-style arrangement of the phrase "Boys, I'm Taking Charge Here." The idea came to her, he said, when the opposing lawyer at a deposition had called her a "bitch."

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at that time. Ryan and Kulka denied having anything to do with the Kansas City trip. In that case, why did Breslaw say what she did, and who sent her? Her immediate supervisor, Mark Gabriellian, was not called as a witness. In both these cases, Breslaw too might reasonably have been placed on administrative leave. But the RTC made no pretense of even-handedness. Nor did anyone think to ask whether Breslaw had kept up her contact with Hubbell, then still at Justice, and whether he had a hand in her Kansas City trip. Breslaw told the Senate banking committee that she recused herself from matters involving the Rose firm or Seth Ward on January 27, 1994, very late in the game, but just before the release of the internal RTC report on the conflict allegations. She resigned from the Madison civil case only on March 25, 1994, after Altman himself announced he would quit his post at RTC.

The suspensions of the Kansas City Three may yet backfire. They provoked further charges from Iorio, Lewis's immediate supervisor. A letter from his lawyer to Jack Ryan stated that "as early as" February 18, after Breslaw's visit, he received warnings that "certain key RTC managers would take a 'dim view' of his office's investigation of Madison Guaranty." Iorio said that, unlike Lewis, he had asked to testify at the House Whitewater hearing but was told by a senior RTC official that his appearance was "unnecessary."

Acting RTC head Jack Ryan stands accused of trying to chill the Whitewater investigation. Much as he denied this charge, the only people he has disciplined in the affair have been those responsible for keeping the Madison case alive.

At the end of the two weeks, the three returned to work, but the pressure continued. RTC spokesman Katsanos said the review of the three had produced enough material to warrant a referral to the RTC inspector general. But others were calling for an IG investigation of the entire episode, an investigation, Lewis's lawyer said, that could "open a whole can of worms."

What Is Jack Ryan?

The treatment of the Kansas City Three marks a low point in the recent history of regulatory degradation. Acting RTC head Jack Ryan stands accused of trying to chill the Whitewater/Madison Guaranty investigation. Much as he denied this charge at the Whitewater hearings, the only people he has disciplined in the affair have been those responsible for keeping the Madison case alive.

Although Ryan has won praise as a regulator, there are jarring coincidences in his career, as the *Wall Street Journal* has noted. At the Federal Reserve in the early eighties, he was the supervisor in charge of approving Clark Clifford's takeover of the banking corporation that became the BCCI-controlled First American Bankshares. In 1985, he joined the Miami law firm of Stephen Arky, who had his fingers in too many dubious affairs to recount here. Ryan downplays the job. He says he signed on to help with an ambitious program of bank mergers and acquisitions that fell apart when the firm became engulfed in a spectacular series of financial scandals.

Ryan told the Senate Banking Committee that he owed his present position to undersecretary of the Treasury Frank Newman, who as a former senior officer of the Bank of America had been impressed by his past dealings with Ryan. The Bank of America, along with the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, was a founding shareholder of BCCI and kept close ties with the bank even after divesting its stock in the late seventies. Newman has been nominated to take the number two post in Treasury being vacated by Roger Altman.

The problems that forced the resignation of Altman began, his defenders say, when he was given the impossible joint appointment of number two Treasury official and acting head of the RTC. The dual role was a built-in conflict of interest and directly contradicted congressional intent for the RTC to be politically independent. It's true Altman took the role as an interim post. But judging from the Whitewater hearings, Altman (and his bosses) showed deliberate intent to control the RTC. The Treasury Department press secretary, and even a White House political consultant, tried to give instructions to the RTC spokesman. When Altman wasn't free for the RTC weekly staff meeting, his place was taken by Newman.

But one doesn't have to glean the Clinton administration's basic attitude toward financial regulation from its subtle bureaucratic shuffles. Its brazenness has become crystal clear in the return of Tony Coelho, the former House majority whip who raised millions of campaign dollars from crooked S&L owners and other special interests. Coelho resigned from the House in 1989 after the disgrace of Speaker Jim Wright rather than face scrutiny of his S&L favors. He has been advising the White House since the inauguration and was just invited to serve as unpaid chief strategist and spokesman for the Democratic National Committee.

Congress is supposed to act as a check on potential abuses by the executive, but a good half of that body has defaulted on its duty. Federal law charges the House Banking Committee with holding oversight hearings on the RTC every six months, and there's a lot at that agency that needs looking into. But the last such hearing took place in February 1993, a year and a half ago. This failure bears out the charge by ranking Republican Leach that the cover-up by the House Banking Committee majority has turned Whitewater into a constitutional crisis. It's a sad irony that Banking chairman Henry Gonzalez, the gadfly hero of the S&L crisis, is now leading the House back into the worst habits of its very recent past.

The White House and Treasury witnesses at the Whitewater hearings seemed completely oblivious to the problem. The "Cutler Standard" today holds it ethical to give the president a "heads up" on anything the press could conceivably ask about. The RTC under Ryan has shown that the only people with anything to fear are the bureaucrats who show too much zeal. The pliant regulators and pushy politicians who gave us the last thrift debacle have returned with a vengeance. ❐

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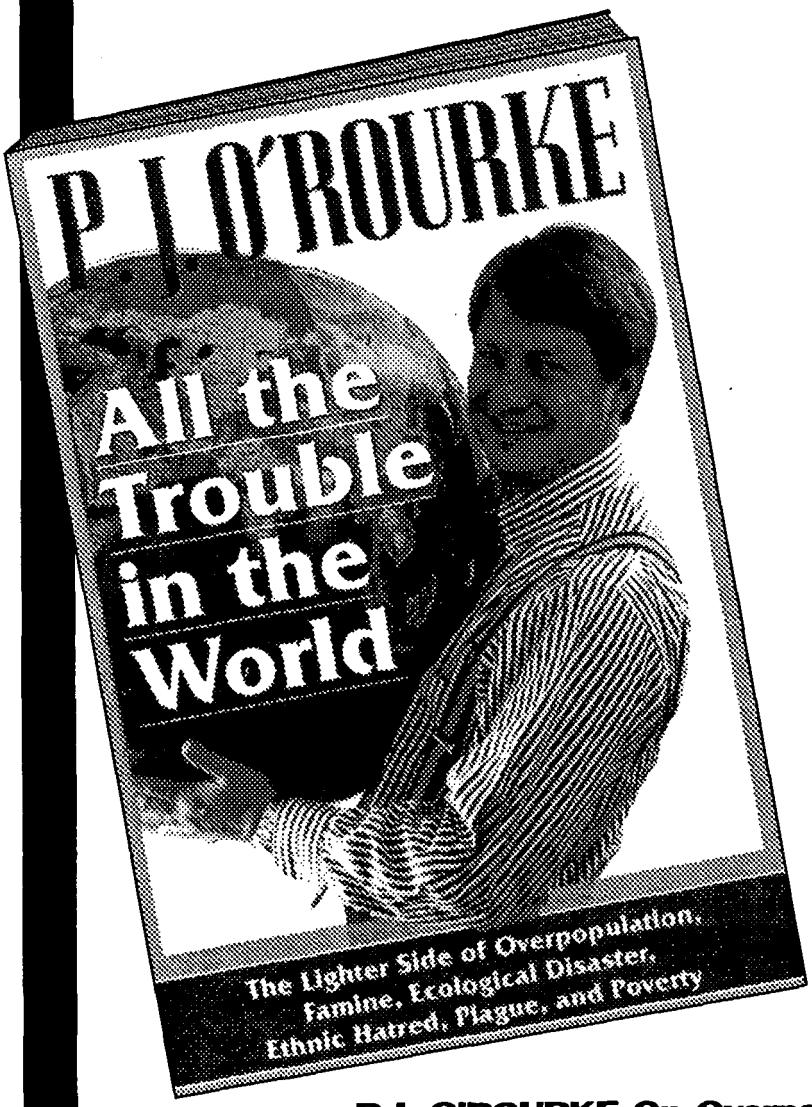
WHO SAYS FAMINE, PLAGUE, AND OVERPOPULATION AREN'T FUNNY?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The Plague

by John Corry

The right-wing peril is on us again, an unholy connivance, the press now warns us, that includes, but is not limited to, crazed preachers, duplicitous politicians, and the unscrupulous editors of this magazine. The peril this time, though, is different from the ones before. For one thing, it is tied to a foundering president, and it is impossible to know where it might strike next. Previous perils were simpler. When Pat Robertson sought the Republican nomination for president in 1988, for instance, the press could cite his candidacy as proof of a right-wing ascendancy, and measure the menace in primary votes. The great peril of 1994, however, is not like that. It is more dangerous and diffuse, and it grows as Bill Clinton diminishes.

At his prime-time news conference in August—only the third of his presidency—he answered questions succinctly, but an air of embarrassment hung over the proceedings, and he seemed to be almost irrelevant. Donald Sweitzer, the political director of the Democratic Party, had told the *Washington Times* earlier that some of the party's congressional candidates would not "benefit" from associating themselves with the president, and was rebuked by David Wilhelm, the party chairman, for his candor. Soon afterwards, however, the *New York Times* reported on page one that Stan Greenberg, Clinton's own pollster, was advising Democratic candidates to run independently of the White House. Subsequently, several publications reported that Wilhelm was being forced out as party chairman.

The administration is imploding, a condition now generally acknowledged. *Time* magazine said the congressional hearings on Whitewater showed a "culture of deception" at the White House. A *New York Times* editorial—"Whitewater's Wreckage, So Far"—accused even venerable Lloyd Cutler, the president's counsel, of "appalling disingenuousness." *Newsweek* revealed that, contrary to what she indicated earlier, Hillary Clinton had told Margaret Williams, her chief of staff, to take Vincent Foster's Whitewater files and lock them away in a closet. Michael Kramer, a Clinton fan once himself, concluded a column in *Time* by writing: "What we do know now, however, is that Mrs. Clinton is more like Mr. Clinton than anyone ever realized. Slick Willie, meet Slippery Hillary."

Obviously the Clinton administration is a disappointment to its old supporters. Few confess to being wrong in the first place, although many now admit to feeling despondent. In his column in the *Times*, Frank Rich plaintively compared Bill Clinton to Tom Hanks's Forrest Gump. Gump, he wrote, "is neither bitter nor cynical, but a healing figure, eager to put his and his country's past behind him to embrace idealism and hope. Isn't that what many Clinton voters felt on election night 1992?"

Rich, of course, was really writing about himself, suggesting that he, too, had wanted to put his country's past behind him and come into a better time. (The country's past, apparently, was racist, sexist, and otherwise objectionable, with not much to recommend it.) But something went wrong, and Rich's hopes have faded. He was besotted by the Clintons, and like so many others in the media is distressed that he must now renounce them. The First Couple have turned out to be tacky. When liberal illusions are done in this way, something must take their place.

Enter, then, the right-wing peril. It is almost wholly imaginary, but it allows columnists and commentators to explain what went wrong, while they reaffirm their old beliefs, and never admit they were mistaken in the first place.

Loony left and respectable liberal may easily unite here. Consider two recent assertions: "I have no doubt that if Rush Limbaugh or Pat Robertson or Ollie North ever got real power, there would be concentration camps and mass death." And: "The leaders of the Christian Right have set out not only to destroy President Clinton. Their goal is much larger than that. . . . It will be an intolerant America if they have their way: something like a Christian version of the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran."

As it happens, the first is from the poet Allen Ginsberg in the *Progressive* magazine, and the second is from the columnist Anthony Lewis in the *New York Times*, although in temperament there is not much between them. If Ollie doesn't get us, Pat Robertson will. Mass death on one hand, Pentecostal ayatollahs on the other, and no place for anyone to hide. As the White House has foundered, media alarums have grown increasingly goofy. Jim Hoagland, the *Washington Post* columnist, saw a similarity between Ollie and Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovsky:

> The separate but similar nationalisms that North and Zhirinovsky express are raw and crude, reeking of claims of manifest destiny and divine inspiration. . . . They are geopolitical charlatans who would reassert a lost national greatness by intimidating smaller countries and dominating neighbors. That was North's style with Central America when he was in the White House.

In fact, Ronald Reagan has disowned Oliver North, too, although without sug-

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gesting, as Hoagland does, that North wants to drop paratroopers on Mexico. North's real sin is not that he is a geopolitical charlatan, whatever that is, but that he won the Virginia Republican senatorial primary. Moreover, he apparently did it, as Mike von Fremd reported on ABC's "World News Tonight," by enlisting "legions of ultraconservatives and members of the religious right." If the latter want a Christian version of Iran, then the former must want something utterly unspeakable. Clinton may be a dud president, and Mrs. Clinton may not tell the truth, but the game is to tell us we are threatened by far worse.

Meanwhile, the right-wing ranks are swelling; new inductees come in all the time. The *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory recently identified Charles Murray, the author of *Losing Ground*, as a "right-wing sociologist." It did not seem to be meant as a compliment, and it is unlikely McGrory would ever identify Laurence Tribe, say, as a left-wing legal scholar, or even Noam Chomsky as a left-wing linguist. The idea of right wing and left wing comes from European parliaments—conservatives sat on the right, liberals on the left—and in itself is benign, but as used by the media it is loaded. The right wing is crowded with bigots and other no accounts, while the left wing has no members at all. A political figure may be "very liberal" or perhaps a "progressive," but never a left-winger.

This atrocious right wing wants a return to the past, and any number of columnists insist the yearning makes up the cutting edge of the peril. Eleanor Clift, for one, wrote in *Newsweek* that "the radical right's nostalgia for the way things were" collides with the gains made by women. The columnists, even Clift, are at least partly correct. As social pathologies rise and the popular culture sinks, there is a nostalgia for public civility and decent manners; and whatever the gains made by women, they can no longer walk the streets of large cities at night without fear of mugging or other violence. If there is a right-wing peril, we are at its not-so-dark heart here. Forrest Gump and Frank Rich aside, the past looks good to the growing number of people who know they are being cheated by the present.

The columnists do not understand this, and it is clear some never will. Here is Michael Gartner, the former president of NBC News, in his column in *USA Today*, preaching to people who listen to Rush Limbaugh:

> He's toying with you, folks, getting you all riled up with a stew of half-truths and non-truths. He's making fools of you, feeding you swill . . . and you're taking it in. So keep listening if you want. But just remember that he's a charlatan.

Gartner may be one of the emptier vessels in journalism, but besides having been president of NBC News he once was also the president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, so attention must be paid to what he says. More or less, it is that Limbaugh's listeners are fools, and may even be pigs, slopping up swill because they are not bright enough to do otherwise. Gartner does give them permission to keep listening if they really want to, but he seems to be doing it because they are so irredeemable he has no other choice.

Gartner, who has spent much of his career worrying about the right wing, is a wonderful symbol of the divide between so much of the media and the people they insist they are speaking to, but he is not at all unique. Words and ideas mean one thing on the one side of the divide, and something quite different on the other. Just before Eleanor Clift fretted about the radical right and women in *Newsweek*, the magazine ran a cover story by Howard Fineman entitled "The Virtuecrats." It said Americans all agree now that there are accepted principles of good character and proper behavior, but that society was not teaching them to the young. Moreover, it said, the "fraying of the country's social fabric, which once was considered the crotchety preoccupation of the cultural Right, has become a national (even liberal) obsession."

Ignore the patronizing reference to the crotchety cultural right. Fineman was only paying his dues to media society. The point of the story was that a great many people and institutions are now interested in virtue, and are doing all they can to promote it.

Obviously this was welcome news, but then *Newsweek* went ahead and spoiled it. Prominent among those listed by *Newsweek* as promoting virtue were Bill and Hillary Clinton. Mrs. Clinton "hasn't given up her search for a politics of meaning," and

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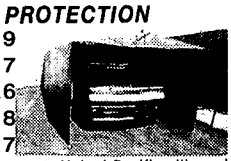

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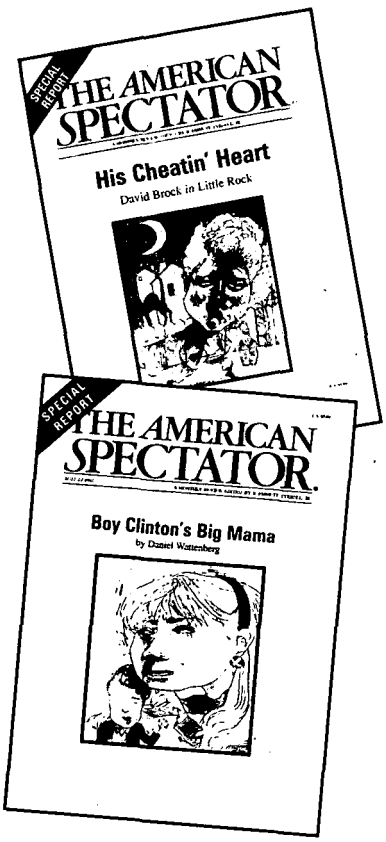

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has made health care a personal crusade; Mr. Clinton has spoken at college commencements about the necessity of good behavior, and called for a government-sponsored program of national service. Moreover, as does William Bennett, the Clintons support "character education in public schools—a trend already exploding across the country." Therefore, the Clintons are "virtuecrats."

It was hard to know what *Newsweek* had in mind with the story, and perhaps it did not know itself. There is no connection at all between Bill Bennett and Bill and Hillary Clinton. Bennett's anthology, *The Book of Virtues*, is a serious effort toward mending what *Newsweek* called the fraying of the social fabric, but the Clinton health-care plan is not, and certainly it has nothing to do with virtue. Virtue may lack a precise definition, but certainly there is a broad one, and most people know the rules of virtuous behavior. The Ten Commandments are thought to be a good place to start.

Liberal Democrats and other progressives have been having a hard time this year on the moral issues, and it may be that *Newsweek* was worried. Old favorites have been sullied. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy is in trouble for accepting favors from Tyson Foods, including transportation, lodging, and skybox tickets to the Giants-Cowboys game for the woman the press euphemistically calls his "companion." Henry Cisneros, the secretary of housing and urban development, is being sued by an old girlfriend who says he welshed on a promise to pay her $4,000 a month after they ended their affair. The Rev. Benjamin Chavis was ousted as head of the NAACP when it was learned he had agreed to pay a woman who accused him of sexual harassment up to $322,400 of the NAACP's money.

Meanwhile, there is Clinton himself, afflicted by what one of his old assistants once dismissed as "bimbo eruptions." The evidence is so substantial, however, that almost no one dismisses it anymore, except those who are paid to do so. Grubbiness has settled in at the White House, and it is no wonder that the crotchety cultural right, not to mention the religious right, far right, and radical right, have been attracting adherents. Even the circulation of this magazine has climbed. The peril is growing, and it may be that *Newsweek* was launching a preemptive strike, trying to prove that Democrats were as virtuous as Republicans. ❐

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The Future Is Now

by Grover G. Norquist

At 11 a.m. on September 27, Republican candidates for the House of Representatives, both incumbents and challengers, will sign a "Contract With America" committing themselves to a radical agenda for changing Washington—in the event that they capture forty or more House seats this fall and become the majority for the first time in forty years.

The contract includes a series of procedural reforms that a new Republican majority will implement immediately upon being sworn in on January 3, 1995. This potential Republican majority is promising not only to elect Newt Gingrich as speaker to replace Tom Foley, but also to radically shift power away from a handful of committee chairmen and to open up the workings of the House of Representatives to public scrutiny.

The opening-day checklist will include slashing committee staffs by more than a third, forcing several thousand Democratic staffers out onto the streets. Proxy voting in committees, which allows chairmen to "hold" the votes of many members, would be banned. Closed committee meetings would be open to the public. There would be fewer committees and members would be allowed fewer committee and subcommittee assignments. Republicans would expand the six-year term limits that already apply to ranking GOP members to committee and subcommittee chairmen. Putting limits on the chairmen would be the most radical shift of power in Congress this century—no more Dan Rostenkowskis, Jamie Whittens, John Dingells, or Jack Brookses. Most ominously for slush-fund Democrats, Republicans would hire an independent accounting firm to audit the House of Representatives' internal spending over the last forty years.

Republicans will pledge to apply to Congress all laws that apply to the public at large: OSHA regulations, civil rights laws, and labor laws, to name but a few. A series of "honest number" reforms would require "impact statements" for all unfunded mandates, put congressional budgeting on a zero baseline (eliminating the present practice of allowing Congress to "cut" the budget by increasing spending); allow tax cuts to be scored dynamically by using models that allow for supply-side effects of tax cuts; prohibit retroactive taxes; and require a three-fifths majority to raise taxes in the future.

If Newt Gingrich as speaker and Dick Armey as majority leader adjourned immediately after making these changes, the 104th Congress would still make history. But the House Republican Conference and this fall's challengers will go on to promise free-standing votes on something even bigger. Under Armey's direction, some seventy-five Republican members of the House have worked since early June in ten different groups to draft ten sweeping reform bills to be introduced within the first hundred days of the 104th Congress. While the specifics of the reform package may change, the outlines are clear. Republicans are not promising they can pass each measure. But it is important to note that Republican unity has been won by promising a vote on each of the ten:

1. Term Limits. Republicans promise a vote on two different constitutional amendments: one to limit House members to six years (three terms), the other to twelve years (six terms).

While underscoring the seriousness of the Republican pledge, this commitment also reflects the flexibility that was and will be required of the Republican leadership to keep 178 present and 218-plus future members in sync. It would be hard to find a reform that is more popular with American voters and less popular with members of Congress—Republicans included—than term limits. Yet even such a forceful opponent of term limits as Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) is willing to allow a vote on the amendments, although he plans to vote "no." There will be a choice of limits because, even though the American public prefers a three-term limit on House members, some congressional Republicans would rather have equal standing with a Senate limit of two terms or twelve years.

2. Tax reform. To include a $500-per-child tax credit; the elimination of the "marriage penalty"; individual retirement accounts expanded to include equity for homemakers; deductions on educational expenses, first-time home purchase, and medical expenses; and tax incentives for adoption.

3. Economic Growth. The capital-gains tax would be cut in half by excluding 50 percent of capital gains from taxation and indexing capital gains to inflation. Estate taxes would be cut, and businesses allowed to deduct the cost of new capital investment, as our Japanese and German competitors already do.

4. Regulation. The takings clause of the Constitution would be given teeth, with a commitment to compensate property owners for regulatory damages. A regulatory budget would be established to identify, then limit, the total costs of all regulations.

5. Spending. A revived Balanced Budget Amendment, requiring that any tax hike receive a three-fifths supermajority, would create pressure for spending restraint, not higher taxes.

6. Senior Citizens. The Social Security

Grover G. Norquist is the president of Americans for Tax Reform.

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earning test limit would be increased to $30,000. At present, older Americans who work lose one dollar of Social Security benefits for every two dollars they earn. This is a stiff marginal tax rate on working older Americans who, interestingly, are overwhelmingly Republicans. The repeal of the Clinton tax increases on Social Security earnings would be phased in and a dependent-care tax credit established to help Americans care for their parents.

7. Legal Reforms. To include product liability reform, British-style "loser pays" rules to stop frivolous lawsuits, punitive-damage rewards caps, and changes in expert-witness rules to exclude "junk science." (This project might also be labeled "defund the left" reform, as it strikes at trial lawyers who've become as important to the Democratic Party as labor unions.)

8. Defense. To include a prohibition against placing U.S. troops under United Nations command, a renewed U.S. commitment to a functioning NATO, and building the Strategic Defense Initiative against ballistic missiles.

9. Welfare. In contrast to GOP welfare reform efforts that were positively Clinton-Lite, activist congressmen Tim Hutchison, Jim Talent, Dave Camp, and Rick Santorum have created a package that would return most decisions to the states, cap federal spending, require work, and forbid payments to teenage mothers not living with their parents.

10. Crime. To include removing federal impediments to the death penalty and changing federal habeas corpus rules, strengthening the ability of states to treat juvenile criminals more seriously, and targeting repeat offenders.

"Contract With America," which began as a project for congressional candidates, has spread throughout the Republican Party. On September 21, Senate candidates will gather on the steps of the Capitol and present the seven key pieces of legislation they would propose in 1995. Staffers explain that the seven bills will follow the themes of the ten bills to be introduced in the House.

Pete du Pont, 1988 presidential candidate and the former chairman of GOPAC, is replicating the "Contract With America" at the state level. On fifty state capitols on October 4, Republican candidates for state office will make similar commitments. On October 11, county and local candidates will do the same.

For Republicans, this is unprecedented behavior. In 1980, it was considered revolutionary when President Reagan and House and Senate candidates stood on the steps of the Capitol and promised to support the Kemp-Roth tax-cut legislation.

Republicans who worried that, post-Reagan, the party would drift left or simply drift are watching the national party come together without any presidential candidate. Republican campaign managers and congressional staff attribute the aggressive nature of the Republican fall campaign and its unheard-of unity to several factors.

First, party unity is a product of the GOP's becoming more conservative. Newt Gingrich may have won his position as party whip by a two-vote margin in 1989, but in the elections since, the new additions to the House have been much more activist and conservative than the content "old bulls" who've gone into retirement.

Trent Lott, Bob Smith, Paul Coverdell, Connie Mack, Larry Craig, and Phil Gramm have brought a more confrontational style to the Senate's Republican caucus. And while Senate rules have allowed individual senators—most notably Jesse Helms—to wage one-man legislative fights, the two dozen conservative senators who make up the Republican Steering Committee have become more and more effective in such fights as this year's health-care contretemps.

Second, the Clinton strategy of starting from the left and building Democrats-only victories—excluding Republicans and rebuffing bipartisan entreaties—has prevented the emergence of a Republican counterpart to the Boll Weevil Democrats of the Reagan years: an opposition bloc courted and treated as allies by the White House. Rather than seduce Republican liberals like Bob Packwood, left activists tried to destroy him. In so doing they drove Packwood back into the arms of Republican opponents of Clinton's health reform plans.

Third, without a president to look to for leadership, the Republicans in the House and Senate have been meeting more regularly—every Wednesday morning during the health care fight this summer, for instance. As one key staffer notes, having to hash out their agenda has changed the world view of both House and Senate Republicans. "They are beginning to think like a natural majority," he says. ❐

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Unmaskings

by Benjamin J. Stein

Wednesday

About ten days ago, I went in for an audition to play a lawyer in an upcoming movie. In fact, the part was to be Robert De Niro's lawyer in an upcoming movie. The lawyer would be testifying before a government commission, a perfect part for yours truly. I used to be a lawyer practicing before a government commission, the mighty Federal Trade Commission, to be specific. I have testified before many commissions and committees. It's my life.

Anyway, I went in and read. Miracle of miracles, a few days ago they called me back. I was asked to come in to read again. This time it would be with De Niro, and in front of Martin Scorsese, world's finest director. I've been preparing and preparing, and today is Der Tag. D-Day. H-Hour.

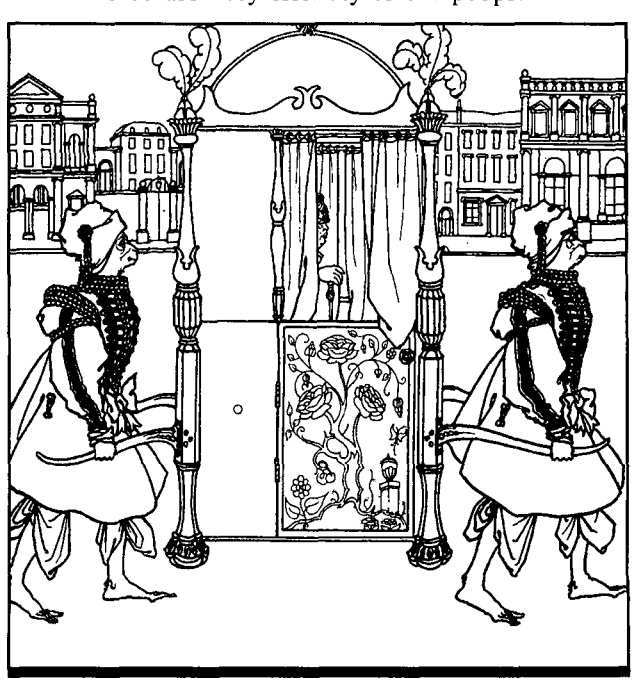
The audition was in a hotel in Beverly Hills. By coincidence, this hotel, the Beverly Wilshire, was the very first hotel I stayed in when I came to Los Angeles to write about Hollywood for the *Wall Street Journal* many years ago. In fact, I'd arrived at this hotel in tears, literally crying, because I had gotten lost coming from the airport, but more than that, I had been so spooked by the sight of so many scary, tough women in Mercedes. (Truth to tell, they still scare me.) By a still more remarkable coincidence, the room for the audition is exactly across the hall from where I stayed that first time. Yikes.

I waited in the hallway for a few minutes. Then I came to the room and greeted Ellen Lewis, the genius woman who is casting the movie, Robert De Niro, and Martin Scorsese, as well as a nice man who is reading another part.

Scorsese and De Niro looked like the most confident people God ever made. De Niro was in Topsiders with no socks, baggy pants, and a shirt over his trousers, and wore glasses. Scorsese was dressed similarly, both looking healthy and fit. Scorsese made me at home by telling me how much he loved my part in *Honeymoon in Las Vegas*, and then reciting it, virtually word for word, to De Niro. De Niro laughed appreciatively. Then we talked about the part. I showed them my ancient Mark Cross briefcase. I said that lawyers who testify before commissions always have old, battered briefcases to make it appear they do this kind of thing all day long. They also are very friendly to the people they testify before since they will, after all, have to deal with those people again and again in the course of their work.

I told them that I had actually grown up next to Senator Alan Bible of Nevada, a fine man, whose son Paul—the owner of the world's cherriest 1958 Impala, the best-looking car I've ever seen—later became head of the Nevada gaming commission.

Then I read my part. De Niro and the other actor read along and we improvised several additional minutes of the scene as if I were arguing with the commissioners. They seemed to like it (although one never knows at an audition). Then I read it again without script, as if I were actually appearing before the FTC or the House Energy and Oversight Committee or the Senate Banking Committee or some other committee I have been before. Scorsese seemed to like that as well, and then they thanked me, and I was done. But it was a happy day.



Later that night, I went to the airport to pick up Little Perfect and his Mom, Mrs. Close to Perfect. They've been away for several days at Disney World and the Universal Tour in Orlando. They both appeared with terrible colds, the way they always do when they've been traveling. Still, I was practically delirious to see my boy. He looked so cute with his glazed eyes—from cold and travel—his tanned skin, and his bleached-out hair, that I just wanted to eat him up.

When I got him home, he demanded a Ren and Stimpy story. I told him one about Ren and Stimpy discovering a new world that actually turns out to

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be an exhibit on the Universal Tour. He loved it and wanted another one, but then he fell asleep before I could finish it.

Saturday

Tommy and I are at Lake Arrowhead. It's in the San Bernardino Mountains, about two hours east and then north from glorious L.A. We're sitting on the dock fishing. Or rather, he's fishing. I'm trying to get more sun. Tommy has decided that it's his destiny to be a fisherman. He's got his rented pole, his Powerbait, his hook, and he's happy. Next to us, there's a beautiful teenage girl giving Tommy advice on fishing. Then there's her father, a retired hockey star who now owns a big dairy. Then there's a grown woman who is smoking while lying on the pier in her bathing suit. She looks great.

This is a tiny lake compared with Lake Pend'Oreille in North Idaho. But it's lovely, dotted with huge houses, docks, and boats. There's a constant parade of motorboats zooming by with water skiers. Then there are the power boats racing with each other. It's a small, crowded lake, but it still looks like it would be fun to have a house here.

"Daddy," Tommy wants to know as he's sitting with his pole, "what's the best-paying job you can have?"

"Probably financial fraud," I tell him.

"What's that?"

"That's stealing by using pieces of paper and lawyers."

"What is the best-paying job you can have and still spend all day with dogs?" he wants to know.

"Probably a veterinarian," I answer.

"What's the best-paying job you can have with dogs where you don't have to cut them open?"

"Probably dog trainer, or maybe actor working with dogs."

"That's what I want to do. Dog trainer or else actor with dogs. No, actor with dogs. Like you, daddy."

"I've never acted with dogs," I tell him.

"Well, I want to act with dogs," he says. "Can I start right now?"

"No, you can start when you're 41, just like me. Before that, you have to go to law school, and then to economics graduate school and then an internship at *The American Spectator* and then we'll talk about it."

"I don't want to wait that long," he says.

The woman smoking next to us absent-mindedly flicked her cigarette butt into the lake. Then she sat up, horrified. "I shouldn't have done that," she said.

"Well, it's a small thing," I told her.

"No, it's a big thing. If I go in to get it, will you pull me up onto the dock?"

"Sure," I said.

Immediately, she dove perfectly into the water, swam out with classic form, retrieved her butt, and then I pulled her up onto the pier. She then put her butt into a neat little plastic bag.

Amazing. A new high in environmental consciousness. But in a way, it all fits. The folks here are unbelievably kind and nice. Fantastically so. The fishermen want to help Tommy. The desk clerks want me to say, "Bueller, Bueller." This might be a good place to hang out.

Sunday

Here I am in Chicago, Illinois, on a set near the Loop. I'm pretending to be a teacher. Well, no, that's not right, since I really am a teacher. Anyway, I am playing a teacher in a fabulous movie called *Richie Rich*. It's based on a comic strip about the richest little boy in the whole world. Have you noticed how many movies are about rich little kids? *Blank Check*. *Getting Even With Dad*. *Home Alone I* and *II*. In today's world, kids have power not because they're nimble or clever, but because of the brute force of money. Hmmm. I wonder if that tells us anything about what the people who make movies think is important?

I'm teaching a lesson to Mack Culkin, who plays Richie. There's lots of great food on the set, and people treat us like kings, and the director, Dan Petrie, Jr., really knows the scene.

My pal John Coyne came over to watch. He's like a saint. He really cheered me up years ago when I was despondent because RN had resigned. We've been best buds ever since. He lives in Chicago. In honor of John, who's a great mimic of my hero, Joe McCarthy, I inserted a famous McCarthy line into my reading. It came in 1954, when McCarthy was being baited by "Sanctimonious Stu" Symington. Symington was saying, "Well, am I a Communist, Senator? Is everyone here a Communist except you?"

McCarthy looked at the famous solon and said, "That's terribly funny, isn't it?" in a tone so rich with contempt and menace that even senators were stunned. I guess I shouldn't really say McCarthy was a hero. An interest, but not a hero.

Anyway, I put that into my reading, and the director liked it, and then we were done.

John and I had dinner in a very tall building where spiders were building webs at least a hundred floors above the ground. "Aren't they afraid they'll fall and hit the ground?" I asked John (as if he knew).

"Maybe in their religion there is no ground," he said. It really stuck in my mind, and I will have to ponder it for a long time. In the dining room high above the lake, college kids walked past me whispering, "Bueller, Bueller."

After dinner, I walked with John along Michigan Avenue, perhaps the last great urban street in America. It was a lovely night. John and I talked about pals from the Nixon days and about how much we missed RN, and about the faith of spiders.

Monday

I'm in New York. I came last night to be the voice and face of a new ad campaign for an exciting board game called "Sorry." I'm staying at a weird little hotel right above a nightclub called Tatou. It's also above a bar with a Spanish name I can't recall.

I strolled through it last night. Two girls at the bar looked at me and said, "Bueller, Bueller." I had a drink with them and talked about life in L.A. One was a stewardess, a great job, and the other was a jewelry designer, which is one step from being a derelict. They were both young and full of hope, though. I give them credit. They want to do something with their lives—namely be stars of something, they don't know what. Alas, they have no education, no connections, no money.

Really, the difference in life between those who have human capital—education and connections—and those who don't is like the difference between being buried alive and being alive above ground. →

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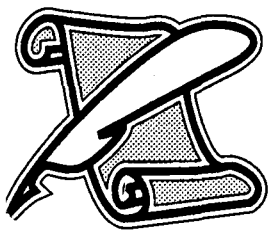

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I did my commercial this morning for a very professional group of folks. No fuss, no muss, and it was done. I spent the rest of the day wandering around New York's midtown, but since I have never really *gotten* New York, so to speak, I didn't really enjoy it.

That is, I understand perfectly well that New York is a large city, home to many corporate headquarters, the stock exchange, many publishers and sweater manufacturers. What I don't get is *why*. It's very much like the city is playing some kind of vast joke on the rest of the world by pretending it's a great, magical place. In fact, it's unimaginably dirty, hot in the summer, cold in the winter, hard to get around, noisy, smelly, Dangerous with a capital D, expensive on a scale that boggles the mind, crowded with unsavory characters reeking of urine and asking for your money, and loaded with people who would just as soon harm you and/or cheat you as look at you.

Not only that, but it's a total myth that it's superior in any big way culturally or intellectually to any other town or city in America. Most of what's playing on Broadway is revivals that were campy trash in the first place. Most of what's off Broadway is just back-scratching among friends in the lower part of Manhattan. There are great art galleries, but there is great art available in books and on CD-ROM anywhere in America right now. In fact, most of what is great about the world's culture is in books, available at any library; on videos of classic movies, available anywhere; or on compact discs, likewise available anywhere.

Or, to put it even more starkly: you can put on headphones and listen to Mozart's *Requiem* anywhere in the world. You can read *Hamlet* and be awed while lying by a beautiful lake in North Idaho. You can see *Gone With the Wind* or *On the Waterfront* in a bungalow on the shores of Lake Arrowhead. And you can do all of that—ingest the essence of culture—without being panhandled, threatened, overcharged, and stuck in traffic. Or, to put it another way: Who needs ya, New York?

Wednesday

Yeah. Now this is the kind of day we like. Today was the premiere of *The Mask*. You may remember that I told you about *The Mask* several months ago. That's the movie I shot with Jim Carrey in an old office building in downtown Los Angeles. As we were shooting, so to speak, in that dismal neighborhood, there was a *real* shooting on the sidewalk outside. Luckily no one was injured.

I little dreamed that this movie would be such a huge success. Everyone's calling it the picture of the summer—and I have the funniest scene in it, with Jim. I play his shrink. Yeah.

A few days ago I was invited to the premiere. I was accompanied by my wonderful agent from heaven, Marcia Hurwitz. When I appeared in front of the theater, five kids asked for autographs and wanted their pictures taken with me. Then some folks with videocams from "Entertainment Tonight" talked to me. And then we saw the movie. As far as I was concerned, it was *great*. The movie stars first Jim Carrey, and then a dog named Milo. By a lucky stroke (but then my life is all lucky strokes), the dog was sitting right in front of me and I got to pet it while it did heroics on screen. The audience tittered and then laughed when I came on. They knew me. They knew that I was funny.

Afterwards, there was a big party at a defunct bank down Wilshire Boulevard from the theater. Lots of movies are shot in defunct banks, I thought to myself. But no banks set up shop in defunct studios. Or, to put it another way, a halfway decently run studio is a damned good business.

There was a big band at the party, the Royal Crown Revue, and some dancers who call themselves Exstasy (sic), and there was Jim Carrey, and he gave me a huge hug and pointed me at the "E.T." cameras while hugging me. Then Shirley Fonda came over and told me that she loved my acting and had been following my career for years. Then people I didn't know told me they liked my "work" (as if someone who had spent a lot of his life in depositions could ever call it that).

Then we all ate hors d'oeuvres and sweated and then I left. As I was walking to my car, a burly bearded man with two young boys by his side approached me. "I'm a Republican," he said. "I don't like for people to hear that, but it's true. I'm a Republican and I earn a living in this business as a writer, and that's pretty rare. I also read the *Spectator*."

We talked for a while. Then, in the garage, a young woman came over to me. She identified herself as a publicist. She said she'd like to do some publicity on me. "Fine," I said. "Great."

"The problem is how do we cover up the years you worked for Nixon?" she said.

"I don't want to cover them up," I said. "I'm proud of it. I even talk to right-to-life groups and I don't make any bones about that."

"You do?" she said, incredulous. "And you work in Hollywood?"

"I do, at least a little," I said.

"Well, I'm a Republican, too," she said. "But I want to keep working, so I don't usually tell people. When they talk about how terrible Reagan was, I just keep quiet."

Then she melted away into the shadows of the garage. We're like early Christians in the catacombs, I thought.

Sunday

Okay. Here's another town I don't really get. San Francisco. Yes, it's cute. Yes, it has cool old houses. Yes, it has a few good restaurants. But it's so damn cold here I could scream. I stopped out of the Fairmont for a walk around Union Square. By the time I got back to the lobby, I was freezing. In August.

I'm here to do a commercial. I had a really great trip up. First, I met a young woman from Buin, Alabama. She told me I was the second celebrity she had met on her trip. The first was Robert Shapiro.

Then I met an absolutely adorable hippie chick, as we used to call them, from Sebastopol, California. She is a fiddler and a full-on flower child. She works as a nanny. In a way that's too Byzantine to explain readily, she stands to inherit about $200 million through the fine work of Mr. Warren Buffett. It has to do with a family-owned candy business her great-grandmother started that Mr. Buffett bought a while ago. She claimed she doesn't really care about her good fortune. "I just want to be a really good fiddler," she said. But she didn't complain when I got her upgraded to first class on U.S. Air. In fact, she was ecstatic. She had huge clumps of hair under her arms. I don't care. She was still adorable. It all made me miss my happy days long ago as a hippie Republican (a phrase I should trademark) in the woods and forests of Santa Cruz.

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Hey, maybe that's it. Maybe we clandestine Republicans could form Republican hippie communes in the woods above Boulder Creek to start hippie Republican bands that could fan out across the nation. Oh, wow. Smoke tobacco. Drink brandy. Read Samuel Johnson and get high on red meat. Hmmm. Gimme Shelter. Don't lead me down that funky ole road to serfdom.

Friday

Tommy has a bad, bad cold again. It's from hanging around with other children. This leads me to the natural conclusion that he should only hang around with me. I played with him for hours, brought him his favorite food, Thai noodles, and then told him many Ren and Stimpy stories. Later, Elena made him and me delicious Shake 'n' Bake chicken, man's favorite food. This man's anyway. Then Tommy fell asleep watching cartoons, poor sick thing. Elena let him sleep in her bed and then came out to tell me in halting English (it's odd that she's the world's smartest person, yet in eighteen years of working for me she hasn't learned to speak English) that he needed to be moved to his bed. I tucked him in and then watched TV with Alex. Soon, I heard some rustling coming from his room. I went in and saw Elena kneeling next to his bed.

"Are you praying for him to get well?" I asked.

"*Sí*," she said. "And also putting tomato next to his feet to lower his temperature."

Sure enough, she was putting a tomato under each foot as he slept. I didn't know what to say so I said, "Thank you, Elena. I'm sure it will help."

At about eleven at night, after I was in my red checked pajamas with my stuffed dog and my photos of Nixon, I got a call. Hilda, my single mother-to-be friend, was about to have her baby. She was sobbing into the phone. Wouldn't I come over and help ?

Yuck. I hate blood. I dutifully got dressed, though, and headed over to Cedars-Sinai. There were guards everywhere because Michelle Pfeiffer, former party animal, now big movie star, was having a baby. Hilda's mother, with her Auschwitz tattoo on her arm, was waiting for me in Hilda's room. She said, "Go, go, Hilda needs you."

I got into ill-fitting scrubs and shoeguards and walked into the O.R. Wow, it was bright. Wow, there was a lot of blood everywhere. And wow, there was an adorable little blue-eyed baby on a little table. Hilda was sobbing with joy under her anesthesia mask. The baby cried. I took pictures. I squeezed Hilda's hand and she squeezed back. "Good luck," I said.

Tuesday

Monstrous anniversary of the monstrous hounding of Richard Nixon from office twenty years ago by a group of vengeful, lawless thugs in editorial offices. I dragged myself out of bed (naturally, I've caught Tommy's cold) and went off to the local studio for National Psycho Radio, the network run by and for cranks, to debate some Englishman about Watergate.

The Englishman was fine, but the moderator of the show was wildly anti-Nixon, and the callers were from outer space. Well, what would anyone expect from NPR? My favorite caller was the crank from Colorado who said he knew for sure that the U.S. had "invaded" Cambodia long before 1971 because "Cambodian weed" had been showing up on the street in the U.S. and the soldiers were bringing it back. When the show ended and I delivered my summing up in defense of Nixon, the host, a man named Suarez, actually laughed loudly. What I love in particular is that the U.S. taxpayer is paying for this kind of radio.

I rested and then went to take Tommy to see *The Mask* at Universal. We cruised along the fabulous Universal City Walk, a Caligari-esque confection of shops and amusements, far better than any amusement park, and then went into the theater. As I got Tommy his snacks, something dawned on me. The popcorn was the size of a five-pound sack of potatoes. The lemonade was as big as a car's gasoline tank. The Nestlé Crunch bar was like a cinderblock. Then we watched the previews. In every preview, someone is shooting an outsize gun or rocket launcher at someone else. In every preview, there is a huge explosion hurling people into the air. There's always a beautiful (or almost beautiful—no contemporary movie star is really beautiful) woman holding a sweaty man in her arms. There's always mention of a vast amount of money and there's always some evil person threatening someone else with death and dismemberment. Then there's the overpowering sound. It's like sound torture while they call it pleasure. Hmmm.

There's something grotesquely overdone, outlandishly large about all of this movie stuff. It doesn't make me feel good. It makes me feel small and weak. I think maybe it's better to see movies at home. Maybe it's better to just read.

I took Tommy home and drove to get some sushi. It was an uncommonly warm night in L.A. There were people in the streets in large numbers. Scary punks with dogs. Streetwalkers in tank tops. Homeless in legions. Russian Jewish immigrants with hairy arms. College students holding hands. A muscular man slicing sushi. A streetwalker on the phone asking a man if she could come over. A dry wind off the desert. The only emperor is the Emperor of Ice Cream. ❐

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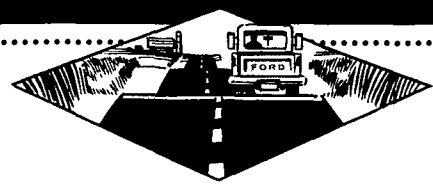

Governing by Appearances

by Terry Eastland

In the first weeks of 1994, when Attorney General Janet Reno was resisting calls for her to appoint a special counsel for Whitewater, she opened a press conference by distributing to reporters xeroxed copies of a recent *Stanford Law Review* article. The fact of this seemingly uninteresting hand-out was not reported in news accounts, and I only learned about it by asking the Justice Department's press office whether any paper had been given to reporters. But having watched the story of the Whitewater criminal investigation unfold over the past nine months, I'd have to say that Peter W. Morgan's article on "the appearance of impropriety" is essential reading for anyone trying to understand the coming and going of the administration-named Whitewater special counsel and his replacement by a court-appointed independent counsel.

"We live," Morgan writes, "in an appearance ethics heyday" in which public officials are supposed to avoid even the slightest appearance of the slightest impropriety. A Democrat who served as Elliott Abrams's lawyer in his brush with Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh, Morgan traces the history of appearance ethics to the Black Sox scandal of 1919, showing that the concept became central to public life only since Watergate. Embracing the heretical thought that the modern concern about appearances is only to some extent valid, Morgan warns against judging solely on the basis of appearances, succinctly explaining why: "Appearance ethics is problematic because it distracts our attention from its primary referent, *motive*. Motive, after all, is how we distinguish murder from an accident." Morgan also points out (among other things) that it's possible for people to manipulate the appearance argument in order to achieve nefarious ends.

I don't know whether anything in particular motivated Reno to distribute Morgan's article. Justice spokesman Carl Stern told me the article was just "something she'd read and wanted to share." Morgan himself wasn't even aware his article had been handed out until I told him, in August. A cynic (the president says we're all cynics now) might say Reno wanted merely to appear to be interested in appearance ethics and its problems. But if that were true, I think she would have done more to try to impress the beat reporters, who so far as I can tell did other things with their time than read even the first sentence of Morgan's article.

In any event, Reno in January was a willing prisoner of appearance ethics. Recall that at the turn of the year calls mounted for her to name a private lawyer to handle the criminal investigation of Whitewater, which had been transferred from the Little Rock U.S. Attorney (Paula Casey, a friend of Bill's whom he'd appointed in September 1993) to a career lawyer in the criminal division. Attorneys general since 1875 have in exceptional cases named outside lawyers to investigate charges of malfeasance. But Reno steadfastly refused to do that, arguing that anyone she might name, no matter how well the person conducted the probe, would be tainted, simply because she, Clinton's attorney general, had made the selection. An appearance problem, in other words.

Reno's argument was the kind repeatedly used to justify the independent counsel statute, first enacted in 1978 and renewed in 1983 and again in 1987. During the 1982-83 debate over extending the law, for example, Lloyd Cutler testified: "[I]t's a matter of appearances . . . to preserve faith in the system." Against this overwhelmingly dominant view of the law, then Associate Attorney General Rudolph Giuliani dissented, aptly describing the statute as an effort at "governing by appearance."

The independent counsel law happened to be on Reno's mind last January. Her seemingly principled position was that if an outside lawyer were to investigate Whitewater, the person would have to be chosen not by her but pursuant to the statute. In January, however, there was no statute, as it had expired in December 1992. Like most Democrats, Reno and Clinton himself were strong supporters of reviving the law, which vests the appointment of a counsel in a special three-judge division within the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals and was finally enacted on June 30, 1994. Reno's attachment to the appearance argument that prevented her from naming an outside counsel and kept the case in-house (a manipulation of appearance ethics?) fell apart after a call from then White House Counsel Bernard Nussbaum, who asked her to name a private lawyer in Whitewater. Very quickly, Reno named New York attorney Robert B. Fiske.

Now, what is notable about the White House decision to have a special counsel is that it, too, constituted an effort to govern by appearance. After all, which appears worse: having a career Justice lawyer on the case reporting to the attorney general, or having a private lawyer appointed by the attorney general but who remains outside the department? Once Reno named Fiske, satisfying the appearance-oriented political culture, Whitewater became much less of a story—not reviving until late February and early March, when reports of the White House–Treasury contacts emerged.

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Nonetheless, the appearance ethic, historically pushed by Democrats and enforced against Republican executive-branch officials, proved to be a game everyone could play, as congressional Republicans and conservative commentators increasingly criticized the Fiske appointment on appearance grounds: Nussbaum and Fiske were professional acquaintances who had worked on two cases in the past. It was scarcely concealable that conservatives wanted a tougher-on-Clinton special counsel, someone who would at least seek some indictments.

The same day the new law was passed, Reno used it to ask the special panel of judges to name a Whitewater independent counsel. Reno did not, however, follow precedent by declining to suggest a name. Wanting Fiske to stay on the job, a congressional majority had written into the new law this language: The division "may appoint as an independent counsel any individual who, on the date of the enactment of this Act, is serving as a regulatory independent counsel." In her application, Reno bowed to congressional will by asking that the court name Fiske, the only known regulatory independent counsel at the time of the law's enactment.

As the Justice Department then explained her request, appearances were beaten out by practicality: A new counsel would have to get up to speed, hire people, change the drapes. But the judges would have none of this. To agree with Reno's request, the panel said in its order naming Kenneth W. Starr, "would not be consistent with the purposes of the Act." Indeed! The panel observed that its decision "reflects no conclusion" on its part that Fiske lacks "actual independence." No, it went on, because the statute contemplates "apparent as well as . . . actual independence," someone else must be named. "As Fiske was appointed by the incumbent administration, the court therefore deems it in the best interest of the appearance of independence contemplated by the Act that a person not affiliated with the incumbent administration be appointed." Appearance ethicists on the op-ed pages of the nation's leading dailies—including the *New York Times*, the most doctrinaire of the lot—immediately applauded the change of counsels.

It is at this point that the appearance business became especially fascinating. Democrats must have found it particularly galling to have been told by judges two of whom were named by Republican presidents that they had failed to live up to the appearance standard by wanting to stay with Fiske (a Republican, yes, but their kind of Republican). A day after Starr's appointment, news stories were published in which the political backgrounds of the judges were examined and the fact duly noted that they were picked by Chief Justice William Rehnquist (a Nixon and Reagan appointee). This rather weak argument from appearances was kept alive in second-day stories reporting that in July congressional Republicans had written the judges and also Reno, questioning Fiske's independence from the administration (and his work on the case).

Then Robert Bennett, the president's lawyer in the Paula Jones case, and congressional Democrats went after Starr himself on appearance grounds. Starr (a friend of mine) served in the Reagan Justice Department before President Reagan named him to the D.C. Circuit. Later he was President Bush's solicitor general. As a private lawyer, he had publicly argued against the Bennett position that the president enjoys immunity against lawsuits involving pre-presidential acts and was planning to advance this position in an amicus brief in the Jones case. Also, he had contributed money and time to two Republican friends running for public office. The argument directed at Starr was that, however fair-minded he has proved to be throughout his career—and no one contended that he had been anything but that—his political involvements created for him an appearance problem. Bennett said he should voluntarily quit.

On August 12, the *Washington Post* carried a front-page story that used appearances to open a new line of attack—against the court that picked Starr. On July 14, while Reno's request was pending, Judge David B. Sentelle, the chief judge on the panel, met with Sen. Lauch Faircloth, one of Fiske's strongest critics. The two—friends from North Carolina who share the same political roots—had eaten lunch in the Senate dining room. The newspaper found out about the lunch after "an individual [it reported] who saw Faircloth and Sentelle board a tram underneath the Capitol complex" called to report "an animated discussion in which Faircloth did most of the talking." The individual, said the *Post*, "spoke on condition of anonymity and said he called" the newspaper because "he believed [the discussion he saw] was inappropriate." (But did the source want to manipulate appearance ethics?) The *Post* did not say it had learned from its anonymous source what Faircloth was talking about, and presumably the source had no idea; both Sentelle and Faircloth have said they didn't discuss Fiske or Starr or Whitewater.

Even so, the July 14 sighting of Sentelle and Faircloth facilitated an appearance argument vigorously directed at the judge. A White House official (anonymously, of course) said the meeting did not "convey the appearance of impartiality" and is therefore "extremely troubling." Rep. John Bryant, the Texas Democrat, said the meeting was "alarming" and quickly drafted legislation to meet this new challenge. Sen. Carl Levin, an author of the independent counsel law, wrote Sentelle, demanding a written explanation from the judge as to why Starr can be trusted to carry out an impartial investigation any more than Fiske. On account of his politics, Starr "lacks the necessary appearance of independence," said Levin. (Sentelle replied correctly that the judges have no power of supervision or termination over independent counsels.) Sen. Howard Metzenbaum went whole hog: Sentelle should resign from the panel, Starr from his new post. Predictably, on August 18, the *New York Times* repudiated its earlier endorsement, made on appearance grounds, of the Starr-for-Fiske choice, and now told Starr he should step down, for appearance reasons.

Have appearances ever been clearer? One of them is that the independent counsel law is a Democratic statute, meant to operate in ways only Democrats approve. Another is that the judiciary has been caught up in a regrettable political morass, thanks to the independent counsel law (a new reason to get rid of it). I also wonder why Democrats decided to push so hard the appearance argument—put on hold when they wanted Fiske to be kept on the job—against Sentelle and Starr. Peter Morgan (thank you, Janet Reno) has warned about the manipulation of appearance ethics for dubious ends. Preemptively questioning any criminal case Starr might develop might be just what he had in mind. ❐

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Free Speech Vandalized

by Jeremy A. Rabkin

HUD claimed to have been misunderstood. It didn't mean to suppress free speech in its enforcement of civil rights laws. The federal department even announced that it was abandoning the investigation that had provoked the misunderstanding. But HUD's version of "civil rights" remains on a collision course with the First Amendment. And it remains unclear which side will suffer deeper injury when they clash in front of federal judges.

The issue first received national publicity with Heather MacDonald's article in the August 8 edition of the *Wall Street Journal*. As MacDonald reported, the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) has been threatening suits against American citizens who dare to protest the siting in their neighborhoods of HUD-funded shelters for homeless people. HUD calls such activity unlawful "discrimination against the handicapped" (federal courts having by now interpreted the term "handicapped" to cover drug addicts, alcoholics, and the mentally ill, all of whom figure prominently among the homeless population.) In Berkeley, New Haven, Seattle, and other cities around the country, HUD officials have launched investigations of citizens and civic associations, in retaliation against their efforts to persuade local zoning boards not to approve proposed nearby sites for homeless shelters.

No one has yet been prosecuted under this program. But HUD threatens its targets with statutory fines of up to $50,000, along with compensatory and punitive damages possibly reaching even higher sums. The point, of course, is to intimidate potential critics. And given that most of these people are just ordinary homeowners, with no eagerness to martyr themselves over constitutional principles, this intimidation campaign could be extremely effective.

Bad publicity forced HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros to order the termination of the investigation against citizens in Berkeley—the case that had received the most media attention and had the most blatant appearance of a vendetta against political opponents. But the status of HUD's overall enforcement program remains uncertain. HUD's assistant secretary for fair housing, Roberta Achtenberg, insisted in late August that the department was required by law to investigate complaints of discriminatory activity that burdens the housing rights of the handicapped. Investigations against citizens and citizen groups in other cities have continued. In Richmond, Virginia, the ACLU has already entered a dispute where homeless people are pressing this sort of "discrimination" complaint against local citizens. And the ACLU has weighed in on the side of the homeless, demanding suppression of citizen protests.

Attorneys for the Washington-based Center for Individual Rights have therefore initiated efforts to challenge this HUD program in federal court, on behalf of citizens still subject to HUD investigations in Seattle and elsewhere. Of course, they have reason to hope that courts will take a firm stand for free speech, for the right to associate freely, and for the right to petition the government for redress of grievances, as all these rights are supposed to be guaranteed by the First Amendment. But will courts really stand with the First Amendment when this requires them to curb a program sailing under the flag of "civil rights" and "equal opportunity"? No one should be surprised if federal courts, already leavened with Clinton appointees, decide that HUD's sword should be blunted but that HUD's zealous investigators should not be entirely disarmed in this venture.

For the truth is that trimming the First Amendment to accommodate "civil rights" is already a well-established game, one that has been sanctioned even by the Supreme Court on many occasions over the last few decades. Indeed, in almost every case where the Supreme Court has faced a conflict between the First Amendment and an "equal opportunity" measure, the court has flinched and gone with "equal opportunity."

As far back as the mid-1970s, the court acknowledged that segregationist parents had an absolute First Amendment right to organize a private school to teach segregationist doctrines—they simply had no right to exclude black students from this school (*Runyon* v. *McCrary*, 1976). The segregationist parents in that case were not, to be sure, very appealing defendants. But only a year later, the ACLU was boasting about its successful defense of uniformed Nazis, seeking to stage a public rally in Skokie, Illinois, home to a sizable number of Holocaust survivors. And the Supreme Court treated this "victory for civil liberties" as too clear-cut even to merit review by the court (*Skokie* v. *National Socialist Party of America*, 1977). It is not clear why freedom of association could not be defended for retiring bigots in a quiet private school, when it was so eagerly asserted for loud-mouthed brawlers staging a public rally in a very sensitive location.

At any rate, the reasoning in the private school case eventually caught up with a far less offensive group of citizens. In the mid-1980s, the Supreme Court held that the Junior Chamber of Commerce—the Jaycees—could not invoke the constitutional freedom of association to escape from a state law requiring the group to admit women. Yes, the court explained, the Jaycees had an absolute right to organize and to stage activities to promote business

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opportunities for young men. They just had no right to exclude women from these activities (*Roberts* v. *U.S. Jaycees*, 1984).

And right-to-life advocates? Do they have a right to exclude proponents of abortion from joining their organizations and totally changing their character? One cannot be too sure. This spring the Supreme Court upheld a series of injunctions barring right-to-life picketers from approaching the site of an abortion clinic. Some of the demonstrators were certainly behaving improperly in harassing clients going in and out of the clinic; protective restraining orders of some kind were probably appropriate. But as Justice Scalia demonstrated in his dissenting opinion, the actual injunctions were enforced not just against disruptive hotheads in a particular organization, but against anyone who happened to agree with the right-to-life position, even those not participating in otherwise improper conduct. Meanwhile, counter-demonstrators from the pro-choice side were left unrestrained while stirring up a racket in the same area (*Madsen* v. *Women's Health Center*, 1994).

This was hardly the first time the court sanctioned differential treatment on the basis of differing beliefs. In 1992, for example, the court upheld a so-called "hate crimes" law in Wisconsin, which provided that once a defendant was convicted of a criminal offense, he could receive triple the normal penalty if he had chosen his victim on the basis of racial or religious prejudice. The Wisconsin supreme court ruled that the law was unconstitutional because its implementation would encourage prosecutors to pry into the private reading habits and the private conversational themes of defendants. One can assume that the ACLU would be screaming with outrage if a state tried to triple the penalties only for those shoplifters or vandals who had previously advocated the abolition of private property. But the Supreme Court looked at this parallel measure (singling out people with bad racial views—in this case, a black hoodlum hostile to whites) and declared it to be entirely consistent with the First Amendment, because, while it only applied to people of particular opinions, it only applied to them after they had broken laws applicable to everyone else (*Wisconsin* v. *Mitchell*, 1992).

The court has even been prepared to swallow measures that directly penalize ordinary speech, when it is the sort of speech now considered politically incorrect. In *Meritor Savings Bank* v. *Vinson* (1986), the court endorsed a definition of "sexual harassment" extended to cover sexist remarks in the workplace that might be construed by a female employee—even if not directed to her—as creating a "hostile work environment." And the court subsequently made clear that employers could be held financially responsible for the remarks of employees that have this effect, even if the employer did not know about them: in effect, the court holds that employers must establish speech-monitoring programs if they want to avoid trouble from the EEOC (or from easily offended and litigiously inclined female employees). Free speech? Not even mentioned in these cases, nor in the EEOC guidelines seeking to implement them.

Quite reasonable people can (and do) find reason to endorse any one of these rulings (and others much like them). The First Amendment is not absolute. The particular facts of a particular case may require special consideration. Or the actual facts may have to be given less weight in order to preserve important points of precedent or of doctrine for later cases. And all these cases are really more complicated than can be conveyed in a brief summary. And blah, blah, blah. But after a while, only the willfully blind can fail to notice the emerging pattern here: almost every time the court is faced with a choice between the First Amendment and some measure to extend "equality," the First Amendment takes the back seat.

Liberals used to think that free speech—"uninhibited, robust and wide-open," as Justice Brennan used to say—would challenge the smug, self-appropriation of America's middle-class Babbitts and so make for a more tolerant society. Now they seem to think stronger measures are needed—like moving drug addicts into middle-class neighborhoods or teaching elementary school children about the lifestyles of homosexual couples ("Heather has Two Mommies"). In this context, free speech begins to look like a nuisance.

Of course, the Supreme Court still remains highly committed to free speech when it isn't distracted by appeals to

(continued on page 80)

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Labour's Sure Thing

by Stuart Reid

Only a fool (or knave) would predict that Tony Blair will be the next prime minister of Great Britain. The general election is at least two years away, and as Harold Wilson observed, a week is a long time in politics; by 1996 Armageddon—or worse—may be upon us. All the same, Tony Blair will be the next prime minister of Great Britain.

The bumbling post-Thatcherite Conservative government of John Major is doomed. The times they are a-changing, but this time it is the mothers and fathers throughout the land who are calling the shots. Professional folk are looking for the quiet life, for balance and perspective; extremism in the defense of idealism is out. The old orthodoxies of left and right have lost their pulling power. Socialism has been rejected, but so has the managerial revolution. The Tory reforms of the National Health Service, for example—in particular the creation of an "internal market" with thousands of new bureaucrats—are deeply unpopular, not least with Conservative voters in the Home Counties. At the same time, the anti-labor mood of the eighties is now so diluted that during this summer's rail-strike a majority of the public sided with the strikers.

The Great British electorate is experimenting with a new political position, the center. That is why Blair, who was elected leader of the opposition Labour Party in July, will be the next prime minister. He is the natural candidate of the center. He says he is *left* of center, but don't you believe it, or him. His is slap-dab in the middle, is a paleo-centrist, a conviction moderate. He can't lose.

Stuart Reid is assistant features editor at the London Sunday Telegraph.

Naturally, Blair is not to everyone's taste. His delicate good looks have earned him the nickname "Bambi." He is known also as "Tony Blur"—on account of his apparent unwillingness to commit himself to hard policies. His enemies on the right have sought to blacken his name by (1) accusing him of being "nice" (like Major) and (2) by insisting that he is a pal of Bill Clinton (of which and of whom more later). To the left he is simply the most right-wing, market-friendly leader the Labour Party has ever had.

That's about the best Blair's enemies can do. No wonder he smiles a lot. Everything's going his way. A poll published three days after his election showed that he was ahead of Major in areas where the Tories traditionally lead: for example, on government spending (by 20 points), handling of the economy (22 points), crime (24), and taxes (29). Less than a month after his election, Labour was 33 points ahead of the Conservative Party.

Even readers of the *Daily Telegraph*—by tradition, the "Torygraph"—are abandoning the One True Faith. Support for the Conservative Party among *Telegraph* readers dropped from 70 percent in the second quarter of 1992 to 50 percent in the second quarter of this year, while support for Labour rose from 12 to 23 percent. The middle classes, who, except for a liberal fringe, supported the Great She-Elephant during the 1980s, are now backing Blair. This has not escaped the notice of Rupert Murdoch, the Great Satan himself, who has indicated that he may put his weight behind the new Labour leader.

So who is Tony Blair? Where is he coming from? And why is he the best hope the Labour Party has had since Clement Attlee ran (and won) against Churchill in 1945?

Blair's family background is a tad less conventional than Major's. The prime minister's father was a mere trapeze artist; Blair was the son of a couple of vaudeville artists, Charles Parsons (a.k.a. Jimmy Lynton) and Cecilia Ridgeway, who were not married when he was born. Blair *père* was brought up by William Blair, a Clydebank shipyard rigger, and his wife. He was a bright boy, and a good soldier. He joined the Army in World War II as a private and left as a major. He was thus a "ranker," an honorary gentleman. After the war he qualified as a lawyer and is today chairman of the Shrewsbury industrial tribunal. He is a solid citizen, a true-blue Conservative. He keeps his own counsel.

Blair's father is one thing; his father-in-law, Tony Booth, quite another. Booth, star of the 1960s social comedy "Till Death Us Do Part" (on which "All in the Family" was based), is prepared to share his thoughts with the press. He has yet to say anything compromising or more than usually embarrassing, but editors live in hope. Booth is a Liverpool Irish Catholic (like the late John Lennon), and was something of a swinger and a boozer until his luck ran out. On November 17, 1979, finding himself locked out of his girlfriend's flat, he attempted to gain entry by climbing onto a stack of kerosene drums and crawling through a window. One of the drums exploded, and Booth burst into flames. His feet boiled in his boots. That seems to have been his rock-bottom. At any rate, he has not had a drink since.

It is hard to imagine Blair pulling that sort of stunt, even if he lost the keys to No. 10 Downing Street. He enjoys a glass, but in moderation, and at 41, he looks good on it. He seems to have been temperate all his life, though at school (Fettes, the Eton of Scotland) and at Oxford he was a statutory rebel. He wore his hair long and played in a rock band called the Ugly Rumours.

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Blair was not political at university, but he did fall under the spell of an Australian minister, Peter Thomson, who converted him to a form of social Christianity. It was not until he met his future wife, Cherie Booth, in the early seventies—they were student lawyers together—that he began to take an interest in politics. Cherie, like many Liverpool Catholics, was Labour through and through. Under her influence, Blair joined the Labour Party in 1975. He was elected to Parliament in 1983, when Mrs. Thatcher's government was returned for its second term.

From the start Blair was a modernizer, which is to say a right-winger. The story goes that Sir Edward du Cann, a Thatcherite Tory, thought that he was a new Tory MP and warmly welcomed him to the Commons. In fact, he was a pragmatist, who believed that Labour had to ditch its socialist baggage if it was ever again to form a government. He endorsed (and has persuaded the Labour Party to endorse) many of Margaret Thatcher's labor reforms—for example, the outlawing of the closed shop. As Shadow Home Secretary he promised to be "tough on crime—and tough on the causes of crime." (This gave the Tories a nasty fright, since it reassured the bleeding hearts without entirely alienating the "hangers and bashers.") In June he told the *Financial Times*: "We want a dynamic market economy," and soon after his elevation he was being courted, indeed heavily petted, by the City of London. In July he expressed his misgivings about single mothers, and said it was okay to be monogamous. Conservative Central Office began to sweat blood. A letter writer to *Private Eye* pointed out that "Tony Blair MP" is an anagram of "I'm Tory Plan B."

Blair, of course, is stealing the opposition's clothes, much as Clinton did in 1992. Blair and Clinton talk the same language; you won't hear either man say a word against renewal, opportunity, responsibility, and the politics of meaning. Both are lawyers and are married to lawyers. Blair himself has cordial relations with the Clinton administration, not least with Paul Begala and Mandy Grunwald. But Blair is not about to make a role model of a man widely regarded in Britain as either a crook or a clown, or both. Privately, furthermore, Bambi (three children) and Slick Willy (one) are very different animals. If Britain had been at war in the sixties, Blair would have registered for the draft. If he had smoked dope, he would have inhaled. There is no Paula Jones in his closet, no Whitewater, no Dan Lasater.

Blair will no doubt get on well with Clinton when eventually the two men meet, but then Blair is the sort who would get on equally well with Bob Dole, Phil Gramm, Jerry Brown, even Lyndon LaRouche. He will be more inclined to look to Europe, however, than to America. He is the first leader of the Labour Party wholeheartedly to endorse what is now called the European Union; indeed, he is the first potential prime minister to do so. This means that the United States could not automatically rely on Blair in some future Gulf War. The logic of Blair's foreign policy position—which

resembles that of Helmut Kohl and the other continental conservatives—is that war ought to be waged by Brussels, not by the individual members of the Union.

All this is anathema to the Old Right, of course; yet the Thatcherite "revolutionary defeatist tendency" is covertly campaigning for a Labour victory. The defeatists reason that a Blair government would force the Conservatives to dump Major and to unite behind the robust policies of the eighties. One term of Labour, they figure, and it will be morning in . . . er, in Britain . . . again.

Let us now complicate matters. As the increase in support for Labour among *Telegraph* readers indicates, some conservatives have a genuine liking for Blair. John Gray, a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, and a former hard-line Thatcherite, has urged Tories to vote Labour, on the grounds that it is the *conservative* thing to do. Gray's revisionist views have caused a stir in political circles here. In a study published by the Social Market Foundation, he argues that Mrs. Thatcher's "paleoliberalism" has destroyed true conservatism, and that the intellectual hegemony of the right is over. Much of what he says—at least on free trade—echoes the thoughts of that other revisionist conservative Sir James Goldsmith. Here is how Gray makes the case for Blair:

> The paradoxical likelihood is that—in Britain at any rate—the task of conserving, perhaps in altered forms, the best elements in our national inheritance will pass to parties which presently think of themselves as being on the Left. If supposed conservatives succumb to the pseudo radicalism of free-market ideology, then genuine conservatives have no option but to become true radicals.

Bambi has good reason to smile, but there is hard and dirty work ahead. Once the honeymoon is over the public will begin to notice that for all his charm and moral purpose, Blair is just another pol. The new Labour leader is going to have to be nimble, especially when he tries to explain how he will deliver better health care, better education and better policing without at the same time indulging in Labour's old "tax and spend" habits. Of course, many Labourites *want* Labour to tax and spend. Much of Blair's energy will therefore be devoted to selling moderate policies to his own immoderate followers. He will fail, and there will be much foot stomping and door slamming at Labour Party headquarters, but Blair will still win the election. For as well as being in possession of the high ground—the ground occupied by the Volvo-owning middle classes—he has a secret weapon: boredom. After fifteen years, the country has had enough of the Tories. As the far-left MP Ken Livingstone has observed, Labour could win the next election "even with the corpse of Kim Il-Sung as our leader." ❐

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Wake-Up Calls

by Jonas Bernstein

I was surprised to see Vladimir Zhirinovsky gracing the cover of *Time* recently. I thought that maybe the newspaper kiosk at the Intourist Hotel near Red Square was selling back issues.

When Mad Vlad and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) stormed the stage in last December's elections, it was the answer to a deep psychic need on the part of Western journalists and other Russia-watchers. Cold Warriors could pick up where they left off, while those of a more liberal bent now had guaranteed great copy without any troubling ideological impediments. This totalitarian, after all, didn't have a "progressive" bone in his body.

Zhirinovsky is already old news in Russia. True, he has managed to get himself expelled and/or banned from just about every country in Western Europe, but such shenanigans have rarely made the front page here. Since his arrival last January for the opening session of the Duma, the new Russian parliament's lower house, the Gorbachev Effect has set in: he's getting much more press abroad than on the home front. Vlad may be the West's worst nightmare, but polls here suggest that a growing number of those who went LDP in December would not do so again.

Quite simply, Zhirinovsky is gaining a reputation as a windbag. So he's the head of one of the largest Duma factions. Big deal. The parliament's lower house, which Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the reformist Yabloko faction, aptly characterized as "a small child in diapers, replete with all that diapers contain," passed a grand total of ten pieces of insignificant legislation during its inaugural session. Early on, Zhirinovsky got into a slap fight in the Duma cafeteria after he tried to cut in line, but that was the extent of the revolution.

Eyes began glazing over after his umpteenth threat to put this or that reformer into a labor camp, and he even began openly squabbling with fellow Liberal Democratic Party members. Undaunted, Zhirinovsky, on a visit to Nizhny Novgorod this summer, threw a temper tantrum when local authorities refused to have a limo waiting for him at the airport. He and several LDP goons took over and trashed the empty office of Boris Nemtsov, the reformist regional governor. He found time to drop by the North Korean embassy in Moscow and pay his respects to the deceased Great Leader. But it had all become a bit *neprilichny* (indecent). Zhirinovsky is less the bad boy of Russian politics than its class clown: an embarrassment, a *durak*, a fool.

Add to that the ultimate faux pas for a Russian ultra-nationalist: the new Hitler's father was indeed Jewish! Walking near the former Lenin Museum (a favorite hang-out for extremists) earlier this summer, I happened on a lone LDP supporter selling party paraphernalia and publications. He was being heckled by an old lady, who turned to me and asked, pointing at a poster of Zhirinovsky: "What do you think: is that a Russian face?"

As for Zhirinovsky's message—that's a different story. Russian nationalism is definitely coming into vogue. Ex–finance minister Boris Fedorev—a former director of the World Bank, as urbane and cosmopolitan as they come—was recently asked in a press interview to name the first thing he would do if he became president. One might have expected a disquisition on the need to stimulate long-term savings or something of that sort.

Nope. Fedorev said he would first "solve the problem" of the "rebellion" in Chechnya, the breakaway Muslim region in Russia's North Caucasus, hinting at steps which even Boris Yeltsin has thus far been loath to take.

Meanwhile, Yeltsin in July made a well-publicized visit to the Central Exhibition Hall on Manezh Square, to see the works of Ilya Glazunov, an artist whose style can best be described as "national-socialist realism." The painting "Wake Up, Russia," for instance, features a bare-chested Aryan-looking Russian youth, his arms outstretched, Christ-like. In one hand he holds the New Testament; in the other, a Kalashnikov. On his belt buckle is written "God is with us!"

Why did Yeltsin choose to visit an exhibition of overtly fascistic art and consort with its creator, whose views are indistinguishable from Zhirinovsky's? The answer is simple: presidential campaigning has begun, and the exhibition was the best attended in the hall's history.

In fact, much of the LDP platform from last fall's campaign has become—albeit in a moderated form—Russian policy.

Zhirinovsky railed against the mistreatment of the 25 million Russians in the "near abroad"—the former Soviet republics. Less then a month later, Yeltsin's spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov rang in the new year by announcing that Russia's foreign policy in 1994 would be based on the "pan-national" idea. And now, eight months later, the Kremlin has promulgated a sort of "Yeltsin doctrine" that links Moscow's relations with the former republics to their treatment of Russian minorities.

Zhirinovsky vowed to put an end to defense conversion, rev up the military-industrial complex, and start selling $30 billion a year worth of weapons to whomever. Russia recently sold APCs and missile systems to Kuwait—a $500 million contract—as well as eighteen MiG-29s to Malaysia. The Chinese would like to buy $5 billion in top-line Russian weapons and technology, much to the dis-

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pleasure of the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan. Liberal newspapers like *Sevodniya* and *Izvestia* gave the thumbs up—adding, in so many words, that if the Americans don't like it, they can stuff it.

Zhirinovsky called for a war on organized crime, vowing to summarily execute the leaders of the estimated 5,000 gangs operating across Russia. A few months later, Yeltsin, in his state-of-the-nation address, cited organized crime as the greatest challenge facing Russia. He said the mafia has the country "by the throat," and described the population as being at the mercy of an "army" of corrupt bureaucrats. In June, Yeltsin issued an anti-organized crime decree including a variety of tough—if not unconstitutional—measures, including the detention of suspects up to thirty days.

Add to this the growing consensus across the political spectrum that the Soviet Union should be reconstituted in some form. Liberals, of course, generally have in mind repairing severed economic ties, with the result being something like the European Union. Ultras like Zhirinovsky and Alexander Rutskoi—the former vice president, coup-meister, and jail-bird, who has been busy in the provinces this summer organizing a new political party—want to restore the Russian empire. The recently returned Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn continues to insist that Russia, Belarus, and the Russified parts of Ukraine and Kazakhstan constitute an organic whole. The Soviet Union is less and less remembered as a hated Communist empire. If there were any protest rallies following the acquittal in early August of Valentin Varennikov, one of the 1991 coup plotters, I must have missed them.

Yet since their strong showing in last December's vote, Yeltsin's hard-line foes have been unable to further cash in on the growing nationalism and nostalgia. First of all, the weak and squabbling new parliament has not become a rival center of power, like its predecessor the Supreme Soviet, which was shelled into oblivion after the Rutskoi putsch a year ago. Secondly, Russians are simply sick of politics: local elections earlier this year brought out only 30-or-so percent of the electorate. (And some within the government would like to capitalize on the current apathy by canceling the parliamentary and presidential elections, planned for 1995 and 1996, respectively.) Another reason for today's political calm is that the government has managed to co-opt the new nationalism by moving to the right on issues like crime and the ethnic Russians in the "near-abroad," while maintaining a tough monetarist economic policy.

At the beginning of the year, when Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin announced that the days of "market romanticism" were over and that he would fight inflation with "non-monetary means," Yegor Gaidar, the architect of Russia's economic reform, left the government, closely followed by Boris Fedorev. When Chernomyrdin stacked his new team with "red directors" from the state industrial and agricultural sectors, both Gaidar and Fedorev publicly and repeatedly warned that the result would be hyperinflation and collapse.

The Armageddon scenario didn't materialize: even Gaidar, in an interview I did with him in July, gave qualified support to Chernomyrdin. The prime minister has in fact turned out to be such a monetarist tightwad—inflation was under 5 percent in June—that Yeltsin's chief economic adviser Aleksandr Livshits has been urging the government to cool its inflation-fighting ardor. The restructuring of Russia's moribund state industrial sector, Livshits argues, must be carried out gradually—even at the cost of higher inflation—in order to prevent an explosion of unemployment and social unrest. (Industrial production fell 26 percent the first half of this year over the same period in 1993.)

The first phase of privatization—shares in state enterprises in exchange for vouchers distributed to every Russian in 1992—was completed this summer. It has entailed the most extensive denationalization in history. Upon completion of part one, Anatoly Chubais, Yeltsin's privatization czar and the only remaining member of the original Gaidar reform team, noted with pride that Russia now boasts 40 million share-holders. The hope is that a second phase of privatization will transform industrial dinosaurs into productive enterprises.

Support for the program has been lukewarm, at best. One survey carried out in February and March showed 43 percent in favor of it, 35 percent opposed. A poll taken by the Russian Academy of Sciences in early May, found that a majority of respondents viewed privatization as "legalized theft . . . undertaken for the benefit of the nomenklatura and criminals." Solzhenitsyn has expressed a similar view more than once since his return.

This summer, *Izvestia* ran a series entitled "Who holds power in Russia?" that claimed Russia's bureaucrats, businessmen (both "legal" and "shady") and the "criminal world" were gradually merging into a single, distinct social group devoted to grabbing the country's wealth. The authors based this assessment on information received from sources in the parliament, the Ministry of the Interior, and "entrepreneurial circles." The study said that this new social layer includes former Communist apparatchiks, as well as "the 'new people,' who soared to the ruling heights at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s on the wave of the anti-Communist movement."

On the local level, this new pattern is discernible in both "red" oblasts and those governed by democrats. "Up to 70 percent of property put up for auction winds up in the hands of people picked in advance," *Izvestia* claimed. "A stable system involving the backstage conducting of deals has developed." The study said that 80 percent of voting shares in privatized enterprises "pass into the possession of criminal structures," that mafia clans control more than 40,000 businesses in Russia, and that $20 billion made from criminal activity has been laundered in the West.

There is no way of determining the accuracy of these rather startling claims. It is important to note, however, they were made not in *Pravda* or the fascist *Zavtra*, but in one of the most pro-reform and pro-

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Yeltsin newspapers in the country. The article merely confirms a widely held view: three different polls taken since late last December found a plurality believing that the mafia now controls the country.

While there is still plain old criminal activity (weapons, drugs, prostitution, auto theft, etc.), when people refer to "the mafia," they mean precisely this system of dividing spoils. Certain economic activities—e.g., retail trade and agricultural transport—are controlled by racketeers, low-level bureaucrats, and corrupt cops. Big ticket items—state funds and credits, privatization, export licenses and quotas—are controlled by the social layer described in the *Izvestia* study, which behaves much like the Brezhnev-era Communist Party nomenklatura. As the article notes, the old apparatchiks are very much part of the new game. A French sociological study of young "New Russian" entrepreneurs done earlier this year found that many of them belong to an old-boy network of former Komsomol leaders. In Russia, as former trade minister Pyotr Aven said recently, "you are appointed a millionaire."

I have long felt that Russia's Choice, the electoral bloc headed by Yegor Gaidar, turned in such a weak performance in last December's vote not simply because it was perceived as "a party of the rich," as many commentators said, but because it was seen as representing the interests of Russia's "appointed millionaires"; as fronting for a spoils system closed to the average Russian.

In addition, the New Russians and their political leaders have had an ambivalent attitude toward organized crime: many seem to view the mafiosi as capitalists in a hurry. This mind-set is in part a legacy of the past. During the Brezhnev days and even into the perestroika period, when the state continued to view private business activity as criminal, the Soviet Union's pioneer capitalists were targets of KGB harassment and thus forced into a clandestine, "shady" modus operandi. Legally and psychologically, the distinction between crime and business remains murky to this day.

Some today actually argue that the racketeers fulfill a necessary regulatory/enforcement function. "In Russia, where courts practically do not sustain or defend economic activities, criminals are the only guarantee of honoring business contracts," economist Mikhail Delyagin wrote in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* last March. "This is frightening, but criminals are the only really functioning justice. They are the only law which makes the functioning of small, medium, and large business possible. The real Russian business law is being shaped not in the arbitration tribunals, which sit on their cases for half a year and then neglect to implement their decisions. It is being created by those informal relations and traditions which are now being born with the help of the criminal's machine-gun."

Wealth is unquestionably being accumulated: the face of Moscow has changed beyond recognition since I arrived in September 1992. There has been an explosion of commerce and construction. There are now 300 bars and nightclubs, some with cover charges way beyond the means of an ordinary Westerner. Not to mention casinos (fast becoming favorite vehicles for money-laundering, given their huge cash turnover), European luxury cars (many of them stolen), Western-style supermarkets, audio-electronic outlets, and even plush mini-malls straight out of Western Europe or the U.S. And the young *nouveaux riches* everywhere, dressed in their trademark lime-green or cherry-red double-breasted jackets and turtlenecks.

Moscow today resembles Bogota: an extremely violent boomtown where, despite Yeltsin's anti-mafia decree, contract killings continue unabated. It is both the focus of the country's commercial life and the command center of a highly centralized national politics that is the sole means into that commercial life. A New York/Washington dichotomy is unthinkable here. Moscow is the place where the key decisions are made—about foreign goods and investment coming in, about raw materials going out, and about taxes governing both.

And, given that the lion's share of foreign investment in Russia stays within the capital's borders, it is not surprising that its caudillo mayor is a major player with national political ambitions. Yuri Luzhkov has managed to wrest control over the city's privatization from Chubais. The burly ex-vegetable magnate never misses an opportunity to drum up more foreign investment for his city. Indeed, he had the Western community in stitches earlier this summer when, at a luncheon for foreign businessmen, he denied that city officials demand bribes.

Moscow is without a doubt the place to be during this period of "primary accumulation." But where does the average Muscovite—not even to mention the Siberian miner or Magnitogorsk factory worker who hasn't received a paycheck in months—fit into this game? Where is his piece of the pie?

The latest major crack-up on Russia's road to capitalism was this summer's collapse of MMM, Russia's largest "investment fund"—a pyramid scheme that amassed a fortune for its president, the amateur butterfly collector Sergei Mavrodi. The MMM pyramid began to collapse in late July, when a belated government effort to look into the scam sparked a panic among its stockholders. Its chief suddenly donned the uniform of freedom-fighter: he threatened to turn MMM's millions of investors into an opposition movement.

Some of them heeded his call: in early August, while Mavrodi sat in jail, an MMM Shareholders Union claiming 20,000 members in Moscow alone, was busy organizing. The group's goal, one of its leaders told a press conference, is to resist the government's "incipient attack on the market and freedom."

The government has actually made no move to close down the company: at this writing, in fact, fresh MMM ads occupy full pages in the major newspapers and proliferate on state TV. Thousands of current and potential investors, it seems, are eager to build the pyramid all over again.

And MMM is by no means the only scam in town: local media of late have been drowning in commercials by Telemarket, another suspected pyramid scheme. And a cursory look at the ads pasted in metro cars promising ungodly interest rates suggests there are many, many others. It appears Russians are more interested in investing their money in pyramid schemes or real estate than in former weapons plants now manufacturing toasters. As the weekly *Delovoy Mir* (Business World) put it in an editorial on the MMM scandal, "a majority of people in this country still think that under market economy conditions they can earn a lot of money without exerting any effort for it."

Economic reform in Russia has done little to foster the building of better mouse-

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A Tale of Two Movies

by James Bowman

Look here upon this picture, and on this. The first is a typical "blockbuster" thriller, ***A Clear and Present Danger***, and representative of the Hollywood culture; the second, ***Barcelona***, is a comedy with a serious side to it but could only have been made by someone with roots outside the Hollywood culture. What is it about that culture? Why does routine stuff like *Danger*, by Phillip Noyce out of Tom Clancy, starring Harrison Ford as the CIA man, Jack Ryan, make over $100 million while *Barcelona*, by Whit Stillman, the *American Spectator* alumnus and maker of the delightful *Metropolitan* (1990), will be lucky to make a tenth of that?

Partly, it is because the Tom Clancy/Harrison Ford combination is a brand name. People expect it to be good, and, although Clancy himself is said to be very unhappy with the picture, it is presumably not bad enough for them to notice how dull and predictable it is. So far from being a thrilling thriller, it is not even surprising. Once again we find ourselves in the all-too-familiar world in which a corrupt president, meant to remind us of Ronald Reagan, and his even more corrupt subordinates are hell-bent on involving the U.S. in a secret and illegal war. They can only be stopped by the sole incorruptible cog in the machinery of power, who slips out of gear and reveals to the good guys of a congressional oversight committee the hopeless corruption all around him. James Earl Jones, a wise and lovable senior official stricken down by cancer, is the only sympathetic authority figure.

The filmmakers cannot help it: such clichés are so much a part of the world that the industry's assiduous mythographers have created over the last twenty years that they can imagine no other. The same can be said of the assumptions behind another brand-name thriller, Joel Schumacher's version of John Grisham's ***The Client***. Here, too, all authority is corrupt. A horrid little brat of a child, threatened with murder by a ruthless crime syndicate, and his criminally irresponsible lawyer, played by Susan Sarandon, together find little to choose between taking their chances with the would-be killers and submitting to the protection of the FBI and the police. Here the subtext is that authority is corrupt because it is dominated by white

males—like the boy's no-good father and the lawyer's no-good ex-husband. But the hyperfeminist slant is only obligatory in films starring Miss Sarandon.

At least in *A Clear and Present Danger* there are allowed to be some good guys. The president (Donald Moffat, who has played more corrupt authority figures than you have had hot breakfasts) determines to avenge a friend, killed by monumentally cruel and greedy Colombian drug-dealers with no obvious susceptibility to anything recognizable as human feelings. He sends to Colombia a supersecret elite force of U.S. troops to blow up a few drug operations. The soldiers are all good, clean-cut, patriotic American boys and fine fighting men, but they are generic creatures, all but completely indistinguishable one from another. Like children who are warned not to treat as pets livestock being raised for the table, we are kept from getting to know these guys. Guess what is going to happen to them.

Brave soldiers in the field being betrayed by their superiors is as much a contemporary Hollywood cliché as "I'm guessing that the boys on the Hill don't know about this" or "the press is going to have a field day with this." The film is riddled with such lines. "The country can't afford another scandal," says the President, when what it really can't afford is more crummy films like this proclaiming to the world that America is governed by right-wing homicidal idiots. Subtlety is actually associated with evil here, as when a corrupt presidential aide tells Ryan: "You're such a Boy Scout; you see things in black and white." Then, as Ryan turns on his heel with a very cross look on his face (the drama in this film largely consists of Harrison Ford giving people very cross looks), the aide calls after him, "Gray! The world is gray, Jack." Ha Ha! Boy, do we connoisseurs of Hollywood's technicolor truths know how wrong *that* is!

It takes someone like Whit Stillman, from outside the film culture, to make a film that is not burdened with that culture's simple-minded view of America. Of course ***Barcelona***, the Movie of the Month, requires more in the way of thought than your average blockbuster—which may in some small part account for the fact that it is less than a blockbuster itself—but its freshness and wit make the extra effort to think rela-

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tively painless. Moreover, it represents sympathetically but subtly that whole side of life that Hollywood either casts as characteristically ill-doing or simply ignores. As Roger Ebert has said: "Watching this movie, I realized that although I'd seen a lot of amazing things on the screen before, I'd hardly ever seen young WASPs earning a living."

Ted Boynton (Taylor Nichols) is the young sales representative in Barcelona for a big, Chicago-based American company. One day his cousin, Fred (Chris Eigeman), a naval officer, arrives on his doorstep and announces that he has been sent on as advance man for a proposed visit to the city by the U.S. Sixth Fleet. It is "the last decade of the Cold War" and the immediate post-Franco period in Spain. Anti-Americanism is rife, and these two young men are representatives of two American archetypes. Ted is the earnest and hard-working Puritan for whom religion and commercial interests are inseparable; Fred is a joker and fun-loving iconoclast whose irreverence is tempered by a deep loyalty to the good old U.S. of A. They find themselves living among those who are by turns bewildered and hostile to all that they take for granted.

It is clear from the start that Ted disapproves of and even rather dislikes his cousin. Fortunately for Fred, he is quite impervious to insults and criticism from his morally superior cousin. Even when it comes to women—as it soon does, since Fred is uninterested in the architectural glories of the city—Ted is earnestly Puritan. He says that he is bothered by the romantic illusions that feminine beauty gives rise to and finds "the whole thing of falling in love with incredibly attractive women *really bad*." He wants a plain, even a homely girl and hopes that, undistracted by physical beauty, he may "look into her eyes and see her soul."

In Barcelona this is not all that easy to do. The city seems to swarm with stunningly beautiful women, all of whom work at the Trade Fair. Moreover, the sexual revolution has come late there and with a vengeance. All these gorgeous girls, Ted tells Fred, are remarkably promiscuous. "You're such a prig," Fred tells him.

"No," he says, "I wasn't using 'promiscuous' pejoratively."

"I wasn't using prig pejoratively," says Fred.

It is a brilliant line. Ted *is* a prig but, a likable one. His distaste for promiscuity shows, but it does not impose itself as a judgment on others. Instead, his Puritanism is all focused inward, a part of the complex of earnest striving and self-improvement that preoccupies him. A dedicated salesman, Ted's leisure-time reading runs to "Franklin, Emerson, Carnegie, and Bettger." When he is not trying to make himself a better salesman, he reads the Bible, which he keeps hidden in a copy of the *Economist*, while doing a strange, kicking dance to recordings of big band swing. When Fred catches him in the act once he says: "What is this, some kind of weird, Glenn Miller-based religious ceremony?"

Fred enjoys tweaking him by telling girls that his cousin is "an admirer of the Marquis de Sade and a follower of Dr. Johnson" who wears tight leather thongs under his clothes to give himself a masochistic thrill. Suddenly, Ted takes on a new interest. "I wish just once," he later storms at Fred, "I could go out with a girl without her thinking that I'm encased in black leather underwear."

"That's a problem?" asks Fred in wonderment. In fact, "I'm the best PR guy you will ever have. Do you think any Trade Fair girl would go out with you if she knew what a pathetic, Bible-dancing goody-goody you really are?"

One night Ted is invited by what he thinks is an appropriately homely girl called Aurora to what he thinks is a Lionel Hampton concert. But Aurora, who turns out to be considered a great beauty by everyone else, does not show up and the concert turns out to be by a painfully atonal avant-garde composer called Vinyl Hampton. This series of reversals of expectations is one of the film's major themes, and the process continues here as Aurora's place is taken by the beautiful Monserrat (Tuska Bergen). All Ted's ideas about beauty and homeliness and romantic illusions go straight out the window. In no time at all he is desperately in love with her and thinking of marrying her. He cannot let her know of this "extremism," however. In post-Franco Barcelona, as one girl says, "there is something fascist about a boy who immediately wants to marry a girl he is involved with."

Monserrat is involved with an anti-American journalist and admirer of Philip Agee called Ramon (Pep Munne) who, like Ted, is a theorist of feminine beauty but takes exactly the opposite view: that beauty is "a memory of the divine." He, however, is impotent. Fred says that "it is a well-known fact that anti-Americanism has its roots in sexual impotence." To Ramon and his circle it is a well-known fact that after the war the notorious American AFL-CIA sent its agents to Europe to snuff out genuine socialism. Likewise, the Spanish-American War began when the U.S. blew up its own battleship, the *Maine*, in Havana harbor. Anti-Americanism becomes more serious when a bomb goes off in the local USO and an American sailor is killed. Ramon claims that the Americans must have planted the bomb themselves.

He also persuades Monserrat to stay with him, as Ted will want to marry her and take her back to Chicago where she cannot possibly live because of the "crime, consumerism and vulgarity"—to say nothing of the fact that there is no culture there whatsoever. "It's a problem," Fred agrees nonchalantly. But while they are arguing with Ramon, something he says suggests that Fred is a CIA agent. The next day he finds himself identified as such on the front page of the newspaper. From this point on, events move swiftly to a climax. But if there is a certain inevitability to the film's central act of violence, it is hemmed in with a series of surprises, right down to which cousin ends up with which girl. All the way through, the expected things do not happen and unexpected ones do, prejudices are upended and firm opinions proven wrong, including the two cousins' opinions of each other.

It all amounts to a continuing demonstration of the proposition that, as a Truffaut character somewhere puts it, life has more imagination than we do. Somehow this is how anti-Americanism is discredited, not by the absurdity, in American eyes, of the plots of the AFL-CIA or by the discovery on the part of the beautiful Barcelonans that American food is not really so disgusting as they had heard or even by the wit and attractiveness of the two central characters. For what is striking about these classic American types is their ability, in the face of such surprises, to adjust their prejudices without sacrificing them completely. It would be nice to think that such flexibility and open-mindedness really is a common trait among Americans, but the sclerotic culture of Hollywood that marginalizes movies like this one certainly seems to suggest otherwise. ❐

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WHO STOLE FEMINISM?
HOW WOMEN HAVE BETRAYED WOMEN

Christina Hoff Sommers

Simon & Schuster / 320 pages / $23

reviewed by LISA SCHIFFREN

Christina Hoff Sommers's *Who Stole Feminism?* is a long overdue correction in the marketplace of ideas, which in recent years has been glutted with feminist cant masquerading as statistics. This book brilliantly describes the currently dominant feminism—Sommers calls it "gender feminism"—which comes largely from the network of scholars, administrators, and researchers who have wormed their way into universities. Gender feminism holds that "our society is best described as a patriarchy, a 'male hegemony,' . . . in which the dominant gender works to keep women cowering and submissive." Its leaders believe that "all our institutions, from the state to the family to the grade schools, perpetuate male dominance." Believing that, needless to say, leaves them eager to destroy or transform all of the offending institutions.

By contrast, Sommers, an associate professor of philosophy at Clark University, believes that American women enjoy complete personal freedom, full legal equality, and access to economic opportunity. She does not believe women are victims, nor that there exists a conspiracy to suppress them. She even points out that during the "backlash" years of the 1980s, women gained more economic ground than in the entire postwar era before that. Younger women now earn 80 cents for every dollar earned by men of the same age, up from 69 cents in 1980. In a time of unprecedented opportunity for women, much of it hard won, she thinks it is important that we acknowledge just how much progress has been made in ensuring that women share fully in the American promise of individual rights.

But forget that progressive reality. The heart of the book is its review of the feminist propaganda that has shaped mainstream media coverage and prompted costly legislation. In the wake of the O.J. Simpson case, for instance, we have been barraged with statistics proving that domestic violence is as commonplace as, say, marriage. Many such claims first appeared at the time of the January 1993 Super Bowl, a day when feminists claimed there was a 40-percent increase in wife-beating. The media provided days of frenzied reporting, culminating in a public-service announcement from NBC right before the game, warning that wife beating is a crime. Ultimately, those pushing the 40-percent figure had no evidence to offer, yet the link between sports and violence against women persists, as recent op-eds demonstrate.

What's the truth in wife beating? The Department of Justice, after a nine-year study, estimates that approximately 626,000 women are beaten per year. Senator Joseph Biden, author of "violence against women" legislation, claims the figure is 4 million, and *Time* magazine reports 6 million. The National Coalition against Domestic Violence says that 50 percent of all women will be treated violently by their husbands in the course of marriage. A 1993 Harris Poll reported that each year 37 percent of married women are "emotionally abused," and 3.9 million physically assaulted.

Sommers tracked down the leading researchers on domestic violence, who found that domestic violence has *decreased* in the past two decades. If 34 percent of wives reported that their husbands swore or stomped out of the room, only 2 percent reported being hit, and zero percent reported severe beatings or use of weapons. Advocates ignored distinctions between swearing, threatening, throwing objects (not at wife), pushing, hitting, severe beating, use of weapons—a very different picture indeed.

Sommers similarly deconstructs exaggerated claims of rape: The Justice Department says that 8 percent of American women will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes. Catharine MacKinnon says that half of American women will be raped. As for date rape, the leading feminist advocate claims that one in four college girls experience "date rape." (Evaluation of the same figures by researchers *un*affiliated with feminist groups suggests a rate of 3-4 percent.)

It's not just violence. A much-cited American Association of University Women study, "proving" that girls' self-esteem drops to crisis levels in adolescence, was the basis for Take Our Daughters to Work Day, yet white teenage girls get better grades and go to college in greater numbers than any other group. (The study undermines its own case in places, showing, for instance, that black males performed worst in school, despite impressively high marks for "self-esteem.") Then there's the Wellesley report on "How Schools Shortchange Girls," which

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prompted the $360-million Gender Equity in Education bill, despite the fact that girls now constitute a majority of college students.

Why do feminists falsify and exaggerate data to alarm women about the likelihood that they will be raped, beaten, and discriminated against? Some wish to portray the U.S. as an inherently misogynist society. As Gloria Steinem puts it, "Patriarchy requires violence, or the subliminal threat of violence, to maintain itself. . . . The most dangerous situation for a woman is with . . . a husband or lover in the isolation of their home." Sommers also concludes that activist organizations like NOW, the Ms. Foundation, and others, rely on academic feminists to produce data that demonstrate alarming amounts of sexism to persuade the public that women need their protection. Liberal politicians need harms about which to be outraged, and which they can rectify with legislation. A media sympathetic to claims of oppression and given to liberal advocacy has no reason not to print shocking, if unsubstantiated, figures. Like many liberal causes that began in a sincere attempt to redress injustice, feminism has become a racket.

Sommers, trained in classical philosophy, takes an interest in the alternative universe of feminist epistemology. Early on she points out that because women have been excluded from the creative roles in culture and civilization until recently, Western civilization is largely a male creation. Knowing that, a woman has two choices: she can use her chance to join men in studying the best of the past and creating the future; or she can reject Western civilization as "androcentric" and "move to reconstruct the knowledge base."

This latter choice has led to the growth of "gynocentric" history, which devalues the exceptional achievements of elite men, placing the work of Shakespeare and Michelangelo on par with female diarists or weavers of cloth, for instance. Feminist epistemologists criticize such "phallocentric" constructs as objectivity, logic, rationality, precision, and science. These modes of thought are "bourgeois, elitist and repressive." In their place, feminists wish to introduce "emotionality—love, rage, anxiety, eroticism—into intellect." They claim that women, not to mention minorities, think "laterally, not vertically." Such feminism, of course, sounds like a parody of a misogynist's diatribe against female intellectual ability.

Sommers also transcribes, in malicious deadpan, the infantile behavior on display at feminist gatherings. Consider the National Women's Studies Association conference, where Phyllis, a panelist from the Mohawk nation, appeared at the end of a break waving animal puppets, to say, "Teddy and his friend say it's time to go back inside." Phyllis then leads the meeting of distinguished feminist scholars in "a big self-hug." After a bleak speech by Eleanor Smeal, the scholars are invited to sing a little song to cheer up.

(The *New York Times Book Review* chose a participant in that conference—the radical University of Pennsylvania professor Nina Auerbach—to review Sommers's book, in which Auerbach is severely and directly criticized twice, though not by name. The *Times* has a strict policy of not allowing people with a personal interest in a book to review it. After the fact Auerbach simply denied knowing that Sommers was referring to her—a disclaimer that is simply not believable to anyone who bothers to read the relevant passages.)

In her preface, Sommers explains that she wrote this book as "a feminist who doesn't like what feminism has become." In contrast to the bad gender feminists, she is an "equity feminist." Equity feminism, she explains, is the true heir of the classical liberal tradition that produced the original feminism of the Seneca Falls convention of 1848, where women first organized politically to demand legal equality. It asks only that women be given an equal chance to prove themselves. Equal education, the vote, equal employment opportunity, access to political power—yes. But no outcomes, no epistemology, no sexual politics.

Sommers is free to call herself an equity feminist. Feminism's sharpest critics—like Wendy Kaminer, or Jean Bethke-Elstain—call themselves hyphenated feminists of some sort: libertarian, contrarian, etc. Even the confused Naomi Wolf, who gained fame as a victim feminist, sought to distance herself from gender feminism in her last book, and called herself a "power feminist." In the world of political reality, however, there is only one feminism, and it is the gender feminism Sommers describes in such horrifying detail. It is gender feminism that per-

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vades the organizations—NOW, NARAL, AAUW, and a host of others. Gender feminists have the power. They have the zealots. And they have the funding. How many legions have the equity feminists?

Sommers repeats the widely circulated 1992 poll data that reported that 63 percent of American women do not wish to be identified as feminists. Only 16 percent of college women were willing to be so identified. Sommers attributes this disdain to the "anger and resentfulness" and the man-hating of the gender feminism that has taken over feminist rhetoric and institutions.

Maybe. But Sommers elsewhere provides a more likely reason that women do not feel the need to organize and demand their rights: They already have them. Early feminists fought big battles—which in their time were considered extremely radical and not wholesome at all. Because they won them American women have full legal equality, equal access to education, the vote, the right to hold office, equal economic opportunity, and absolute sexual autonomy, including the right to abortion. There are still problems in women's lives, of course, but the war is over and the troops have gone home. We don't need a standing feminist movement.

If many elite women, like Sommers, fail to realize this, it is partly due to a semantic problem. In New Class circles, the word "feminism" remains wholly positive, interchangeable with "pro-woman." Anyone who doesn't call herself a feminist may be accused of supporting repression, passivity, and dependence—and be peremptorily dismissed. What precisely does it mean for Sommers to insist that she is a feminist, of the pure faith? It is a little bit like those American Communists who, after learning the truth about Stalin, still clung to the notion that Communism itself was good, it had just "never been tried."

Perhaps this would be clearer had Sommers placed feminism—the real-world, manifest feminism she examines, not the long-dead wholesome kind she espouses—in its larger political context. It is not an accident that feminism has become the anti-American, anti-religious, anti-capitalist, anti-democratic, anti-male movement that Sommers describes. Nor is it an accident that this movement has flowered in the universities. In fact, gender feminism is part of the Marxian politics that swept American culture in the 1960s. In the still larger political context—the "culture war" being played out in Hollywood, Congress, the public schools, the universities, and every other important institution in society—feminism is on the side of revolution.

For Sommers to illustrate so clearly that organized feminism is a hollow movement, yet to declare herself firmly a feminist bespeaks a certain political naïveté. Her book was funded by conservative foundations; her agents specialize in conservative authors; and *National Review* published an excerpt. Conservatives are generally too contemptuous of feminism to immerse themselves in feminism, which partly explains why they have been so ineffective in combating it.

Nonetheless, *Who Stole Feminism?* amounts to a major attack in the culture war. It will be interesting to see in what direction Sommers's political views evolve as she comes to understand the magnitude of the fight she has joined. ❐

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Jeffrey Meyers

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Edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli

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HEMINGWAY: A LIFE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES

James R. Mellow

Addison-Wesley / 704 pages / $15 paper

reviewed by DONALD LYONS

The 1920s will stand as the century's best decade for American prose, but the time was its own worst enemy. Edmund Wilson casually posed the problem when he wrote, "I find I am a man of the twenties. I am still expecting something exciting: drinks, animated conversation, gaiety, brilliant writing, uninhibited exchange of ideas." Tellingly, he put the drinking before the writing. The decade's most characteristic writers metastasized much messy drinking and living into art; some recent writing about the period demetastasizes the art back into booze.

A case in point is Jeffey Meyers, a prolific biographer who treats Scott Fitzgerald's writing as the excrescence of a misspent life. He makes a partial exception for *The Great Gatsby* (1925), where the author "uses fiction to tell his own story—reflecting on the superior and brutal qualities of the rich and on the impossibility of becoming one of them—but it is now truly *invented* fiction, not something carelessly cobbled together from diaries and letters and clever remarks." He gives the names of some "real-life models" for the characters but allows that the novel "transcends Fitzgerald's personal life and brilliantly expresses some of the dominant themes in American literature." After these patronizing bromides, Meyers turns happily to Fitzgerald's sins, his "worship of youth, his sexual naïveté, attraction to money, alcoholism, self-pity and lack of dedication to his art." With noises of disapproval, the rest of this dismal book chronicles every last erotic fumble and drunken nastiness of poor Fitzgerald, who died in 1940 at the age of 44 in the Hollywood he was in the act of capturing so well in the unfinished *Last Tycoon.*

After such lame praise and facile blame, it is well to summon up the sound of *Gatsby* to remind ourselves of the art of it, the joy of it. Here is the novel's narrator, Nick Carraway:

> I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives. Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments, and they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness. At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes. . . . I felt a sinking in my heart. Forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited, and voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes made unintelligible circles inside. Imagining that I, too, was hurrying toward gaiety and sharing their intimate excitement, I wished them well.

Language like this comprehends not just the flush of romanticism, but a grownup awareness of romanticism's limits. But Fitzgerald has learned from Joyce's *Portrait* how to blend the two tones. However he went on to play life's hand, this writer knew a great deal in 1925. And he was, through his knowledge, a superb critic, as the Bruccoli collection of letters shows. He knew what he was doing. As he wrote to his editor Maxwell Perkins in 1924 about *Gatsby*, "In my new novel I'm thrown on purely creative work—not trashy imaginings as in my stories but the sustained imagination of a sincere and yet radiant world. . . . This book will be a consciously artistic achievement." (We can see where Meyers found his insight.) When the book was done, he wrote to John Peale Bishop, about a certain vagueness in Jay Gatsby, "You are right about Gatsby being blurred and patchy. I never at any one time saw him clear myself—for he started as one man I knew and then changed into myself—the amalgam was never complete in my mind."

His June 1926 letter to his new friend Ernest Hemingway about an early version of *The Sun Also Rises* spots weaknesses that were to manifest themselves in every Hemingway opus: he points to Hemingway's "tendency to envelope [*sic* throughout Scott's poorly spelled letters] or (as it usually turns out) to *embalm* in mere wordiness an anecdote or joke thats casually appealed to you," to his "condescending *casuallness*," to his "24 sneers, superiorities, and nose-thumbings-at-nothing," to his "elephantine facetious-

Donald Lyons is the author of the new book, Independent Visions: A Critical Introduction to Recent Independent American Film *(Ballantine).*

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ness." He finds heroine Brett Ashley bookishly unreal and hero Jake Barnes less "like an impotent man" than "like a man in a sort of moral chastity belt." Fitzgerald is frequently accused of blindly hero-worshipping Hemingway's virile self-confidence; whatever the justice of that charge, it is clear that Fitzgerald the critic looked at Hemingway the writer without blinders.

It is no news that Fitzgerald wrote eloquent and beautiful letters; his late letters to his daughter are famous. But this remarkably copious and brilliantly edited collection, which includes letters *to* Fitzgerald, too, establishes something else: Fitzgerald was his own best chronicler. Literally, all one needs to know is here; with a minimum of ingenuity, a reader can construct his own interactive Fitzgerald biography, and he can do so while keeping company solely with the lovely language of Fitzgerald.

Of course, intelligent biographies, books that know what art is and what life is, are possible. James R. Mellow's book on Hemingway is such a book; it is the third in a trilogy of books about twenties modernists, the previous two centering on Gertrude Stein and on Fitzgerald. Mellow's snooty-sounding subtitle in fact comes from "Soldier's Home," a story about a Great War veteran finding life back with his parents difficult. It is one of the finest stories in Hemingway's first—and likely his best—book, the 1925 collection *In Our Time*.

In Paris in the early twenties—Paris was for Hemingway what New York was for Fitzgerald, a guiltless escape from the Middle West—Hemingway was looking back to his familial experiences in Illinois and to his wartime experiences in Italy and was chiseling them into art. He was an extremely conscious artist, a young writer in whom the Parisian weather and the lessons of Gertrude Stein about verbal spareness and emotional indirection and the lessons of Cézanne about spatial geometries were fusing with his memories at an intense heat. What is surprising about Hemingway is how much of his writing is *about* writing. Mellow reminds us that Nick, the fisherman hero of "Big Two-Hearted River," the elusively beautiful story that concludes *In Our Time*, is not just a man escaping some unspecified awful past and healing some unspoken wound, but is a writer. The hero of *The Sun Also Rises* is a writer, if a journalist (as was Hemingway, of course); more covertly, all the analysis of bullfighting is a metaphorical analysis of writing. And how much of later (and poorer) Hemingway is about writers and writing! *Green Hills of Africa* discourses at great length on the subject; *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has a writer for hero, and so forth.

Mellow sees that fiction is a "complex weave of life circumstances, stray knowledge, unbidden psychological motivations, old hurts, new fears, grievances real or imagined, mere coincidences, suppressed rivalries, the constructive urge." His is a wise, sane voice unwilling to reduce art to gossip, insisting that "it is in the distinctions between the life and work that one is more likely to find those clues that suggest a writer's motivations, the exercise of the creative mind." He reminds us, for instance, that literary epiphanies "have their origins in the mundane world, in the banalities of dusty journeys, cheap hotels, sweltering nights, noise, crowds, personal animosities." He is thinking of the differences between Hemingway's real discovery of bullfighting and that discovery as rendered in *Sun Also Rises*, but his generalization is richly useful. Reading Mellow is like reading a Victorian sage, like reading Elizabeth Gaskell on Charlotte Brontë or reading George Eliot on anything. Amid today's welter of tabloid biographies he offers a high pleasure.

But finally writers' biographies are a drug, the detoxifying antidote to which is to go back and read the writers themselves. In "The Three-Day Blow," one of the stories in *In Our Time*, Nick talks with his pal Bill about the edgy breakup he's had with his girl; it is one of Hemingway's characteristically elliptical pieces about tensions between the sexes; it begins:

> The rain stopped as Nick turned into the road that went up through the orchard. The fruit had been picked and the fall wind blew through the bare trees. Nick stopped and picked up a Wagner apple from beside the road, shiny in the brown grass from the rain. He put the apple in the pocket of his Mackinaw coat.

From Turgenev and Joyce and Stein and Cézanne and from his own gift Hemingway found a way to make the crystalline words do the emotional work of the story. The whole sad picture is miraculously in that second sentence. This was Hemingway's modernism, but it was a modernism of the sketch; he had no architectonic knack and the traditional structures of his later novels rather imprison than enable his talent.

Nineteen-twenty-five was a good year for American writers other than these flamboyant presences. Willa Cather published a masterwork, *The Professor's House*, not only a great book but a great *modernist* book, for it tells its tale through discontinuity and juxtaposition. Gertrude Stein rang in with the huge *The Making of Americans*, but she had done her foundation-of-modernism work long ago in 1909 with *Three Lives*. John Dos Passos published his New York City novel, *Manhattan Transfer*. And there was a towering masterwork in a pre-modernist, full-throated, massive mode: Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*.

But the special oxygen in American prose in those years was that of modernism. Writers were fusing at intense heat their living and their reading. Another epic drinker, William Faulkner, achieved the decade's last great piece of American prose in *The Sound and the Fury* in 1929, and in talking about how he did it he summed up the flavor of a lot of the time's accomplishment:

> The writing of it as it now stands taught me both how to write and how to read, and even more: It taught me what I had already read, because on completing it I discovered, in a series of repercussions like summer thunder, the Flauberts and Conrads and Turgenevs which as much as ten years before I had consumed whole and without assimilating at all, as a moth or a goat might. I have read nothing since; I have not had to. . . . That eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which the yet unmarred sheets beneath my hand held inviolate and unfailing—will not return. . . . I shall never know it again. ❐

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CHINA WAKES: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SOUL OF A RISING POWER

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Norton / 431 pages / $25

reviewed by FRED BARNES

A funny thing happened to my family—two adults, four kids—as we ate dinner last summer at the penthouse restaurant of the Sheraton Hotel in Shanghai. Our waitress, a young woman who spoke perfect English, whispered to my wife Barbara how fortunate she is to have so many children. This is not what my wife is used to hearing. Back in the United States, having four kids is often seen as hopelessly backward and even ecologically harmful. Worse, for an upwardly mobile woman, a large family is viewed as a career wrecker. But our Chinese waitress was envious. She doted on my kids, especially my nine-year-old son. She said she yearns to get married, move to America, have lots of children.

That was my brush with the most coercive "family planning" scheme in the world, China's one-child policy. No, the waitress never mentioned the policy, but it had to be in the back of her mind. The one-child rule not only suppresses the natural desire of parents to have several kids, it does so through abortions (frequently forced), sterilization, and infanticide. And it has produced, writes Sheryl WuDunn, "a dramatic rise in the worst kind of discrimination: that which denies females even the right to exist." Since peasants frequently want sons and 900 million of China's 1.2 billion people are peasants—well, you can guess what happens. Parents don't want to "waste" their only chance for a child if ultrasound tests show it's a girl. So they choose an abortion instead. "Before the new family planning policy, a couple could afford to raise daughters and simply try again for a son," according to WuDunn. "Now that is no longer feasible." The policy, rigidly enforced since 1991, dramatically boosted the ratio of male to female births, resulting in "more than 1.7 million missing girls annually."

In truth, the world knows very little about the one-child policy, or about the role of modern technology in effectuating it. "It may well be that in China today, the modern machine that is having the most far-reaching impact on society is not the personal computer, the FAX or even the car, but rather the ultrasound scanner," says WuDunn. "Of the 1.7 million missing girls each year, perhaps the largest number were simply detected before birth by ultrasound and then aborted." Yet China experts and the press have scarcely broached the subject of zealous enforcement of the one-child policy. "We didn't notice this extraordinary event," admits WuDunn, who covered China for the *New York Times* from 1988 to 1993 along with her husband, Nicholas Kristof. "Neither did diplomats, scholars or Chinese intellectuals. It was one of the major policy decisions of that period, but because it happened in the Chinese countryside, nobody had a clue. That is a pretty good indictment of the state of China-watching today."

The indictment stands. As Kristof and WuDunn point out, China watchers overlooked the tens of millions killed by Mao Tse-tung's policies, and they aren't much better now. On the right, the big story in China is the economic boom that has spurred a growth rate of nearly 10 percent for the past decade. For William Overholt, a managing director of Bankers Trust Company based in Hong Kong and author of *The Rise of China*, the boom's blessings blot out unpleasant aspects of Chinese life, including the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the one-child policy. On the left, Tiananmen Square looms large, as does the unsavory side of the free market revolution that has obliterated the legacy of the left's former hero, Mao. In *Mandate of Heaven*, Orville Schell, a prolific writer on China (seven books), treats environmental problems as far more disturbing than coercive abortions and sterilization. "The darkest side of this economic miracle," he writes ominously, "was probably the exploitation of China's natural resources and the degradation of its environment." And the left wonders why it's wound up on the dungheap of history!

Kristof and WuDunn—he's a Harvard

Fred Barnes is a senior editor of the New Republic.

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grad from rural Oregon, she grew up on the West Side of Manhattan and went to Cornell—offer a corrective. They bravely wade through Chinese history since 1949 and confess their rosy assessment of Mao's rule was wrongheaded. Kristof says he held "the conventional liberal view that the Communist Revolution itself was not such a bad thing for China." No more. He traces the course of Communist rule, starting with the 4 million killed between 1948 and 1955. "And that was in Mao's benevolent period." Mao's Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1961 was more disastrous: 30 million starved to death. "Thirty million!" writes Kristof. "Never before had so many died in one country for any reason, either war or natural disaster." Then came the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s. Kristof obtained secret Communist Party documents that acknowledged widespread cannibalism during the Cultural Revolution. This wasn't to avert starvation. "The compulsion was ideological: the cannibalism took place in public, often organized by Communist Party officials and people indulged communally to prove their revolutionary ardor." By comparison with all this cruelty and bloodshed, Kristof and WuDunn estimate 400 to 800 people were killed when Deng's troops attacked Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989.

During the worst Maoist atrocities, Kristof and WuDunn write, reporters in Hong Kong had a better take on China than journalists in the country. They don't say a leftist like Edgar Snow, author of the Mao-idolizing *Red Star over China*, was blinded by ideology or fooled by Maoist propaganda. But they note that Snow was wandering around China in 1960 during the worst days of the famine and denied its existence. Another apologist, Felix Greene, wrote a well-received book called *Awakened China* in 1961. He zinged reporters who relied on refugee accounts and never visited China. "Three decades later, what is most striking about [Greene's] remarks is how wrong they were," says WuDunn.

Kristof and WuDunn, who write alternating chapters of their book, take an on-the-one-hand, on-the-other-hand approach on where China is heading. This may sound wishy-washy, but it works. After all, who knows if the signs of dynastic decay (mindless repression, widespread corruption, flourishing of cults) point to the collapse of China? Or if the positive indicators (soaring economy, improving public health) are more significant? I don't. I don't think Overholt or Schell do either. Kristof and WuDunn admit they don't. "Foreigners sometimes point to China's new problems and get a bit hysterical," writes Kristof. "Corruption, religious zeal and public skepticism may be the hallmarks not of a disintegrating country but simply of a normal nation."

Deng, a hero to Overholt and devil to Schell, gets balanced treatment from Kristof and WuDunn. His embrace of "market Leninism" spurred China's breathtaking economic success since

1979. "You can make the argument," WuDunn writes, "that in the post-Cold War world, the most important man in the world is Deng Xiaoping. . . . Few leaders in recent history have so dramatically improved the lives of as many people as Deng did in his final years." Roughly 170 million Chinese were lifted out of poverty in the Deng era. But there's a caveat. "We don't give the government full credit for the rising living standards," they say in a chapter written jointly. "Fundamentally the economy is booming not because of Communism but because Communism is collapsing."

Schell concentrates on Tiananmen Square and its aftermath, and his reporting is vivid and detailed. He regards the student movement as evidence that the mandate of heaven was "slipping from the hands of China's older Communist generation, and that the traditional virtues of righteousness, sincerity, loyalty, conscientiousness, and compassion that Chinese once considered to be the *sine qua non* of good rule were passing into the hands of a younger generation." Schell succumbs to youth worship, but it's true the Tiananmen rebels are appealing. Schell's favorite is Wu'er Kaixi, who dressed down Premier Li Peng on national television. In 1994, though, Schell finds Wu'er working at a restaurant near San Francisco Airport. If he returns to China, Wu'er says, "either I want to do something that is really politically meaningful, or I want to become a billionaire!"

In Overholt's defense, he doesn't aim to give a social portrait of China. His problem is that his economic determinism gets the better of him. Given China's zeal for capitalism, it's bound to evolve benignly, he thinks, and China's takeover of Hong Kong in 1997 will be peaceful. Why? China needs to preserve Hong Kong's prosperous economy. "Contemporary China is not another Soviet Union, nor is it the totalitarian Chinese state of 1966 but rather a gigantic, vintage 1972 South Korea," Overholt insists. Maybe he should get out more and talk to the Chinese refugee in the street.

One final issue. My fear is now that President Clinton has extended most favored nation status to China, the U.S. (particularly conservatives) will think its job is done. It's not. The American role as power broker is critical. "The U.S. presence is a principal reason why there was no second Korean War, no serious warfare between Beijing and Taipei, no major war between neighboring Southeast Asian states, no dangerous worsening of Japanese-Chinese tensions," Overholt writes. American influence on China is limited, concedes WuDunn, but the Chinese are anxious to avoid U.S. disapproval. Thus, American pressure can help on human rights, arms sales, coercive abortions, etc. "We should also be more open about embracing Taiwan in its march toward democracy," she says, and "play a deterrent role to reduce the risk of a mainland military attack." China's response will consist of "ranting, threatening, and eventually acquiescing." The sooner, the better. ❐

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REBELLIONS, PERVERSITIES, AND MAIN EVENTS

Murray Kempton

Times Books / 570 pages / $27.50

reviewed by RICHARD BROOKHISER

Early on in this collection of pieces written over the last thirty years, Murray Kempton praises the late columnist Westbrook Pegler, a lifelong hero, for his "fierce and unreasonable vanity about [his] craft." This is also, of course, a projection of qualities Kempton hopes he has. Does this book bear him out?

Murray Kempton's toolkit is a small set of prejudices. When the world presents him with material his prejudices happen to match, his hands dance; when it doesn't, the effect is like watching a piano tuner fuss with a carburetor. Here are some of the main prejudices on exhibit:

• *The virtue of women.* Kempton always gives a woman a break, even Lillian Hellman, and the thought of men who do not gives him real pain. The one time his chivalry seems to fail here is in a review of the memoirs of Jane Alpert, a veteran of the Weather Underground: one of Kempton's more insightful pieces, but also his only acrid one. Kempton's ill-temper arises from being forced to contemplate the love life of radicals, c. 1969. He can't forgive Alpert for giving herself to such louts, and ends up sounding like John Crowe Ransom's old man in a dust coat trying.

• *The logical conclusion is almost always wrong.* This principle allows Kempton full enjoyment of his eclectic circle of acquaintances. If he likes someone, it does not matter whether they are Communists, or mobsters, or even anti-Communists: Kempton will never deny them what he imagines to be their due. How odd, then, that he should be so often tempted by logic, not as a thinker but as a writer. The desire to nail down every last calibration produces those sentences that the magazine *Seven Days* once lampooned by diagramming. Sentences like this: "If our eyes were keen enough, the image of Stepin Fetchit might show them not a little about the protracted term beneath the notice of the general public that the craftsman can use for scouring the murk where hide the subtleties that even coarse performers require if they are to stick in our memories."

• *There aren't all that many human creatures more attractive than some revolutionaries can be, at least until they win.* Kempton clearly believes that the qualifying coda of this sentence, which is from a piece on El Salvador, brings it into line with his visceral hatred of revolutionary brutality (he cites Edmund Burke approvingly several times in this book). But does it? Some revolutionaries might be brutes from the word go, but Kempton is powerless to say so, until they have won. One wonders how Kempton, subbing for Burke, would have written up some dashing young priest-drowner in the Vendée. If chance had sent a drowned priest's mother Kempton's way, he would of course be severe; but if not . . . probably not.

• *The matter is not entirely simple.* This phrase, from an essay on the aforementioned Ms. Hellman, could be the epigraph for the book. The trouble is, sometimes the matter *is* simple. Lillian Hellman, for instance, was a Communist harpie with (a little) talent. That's simple enough, isn't it? But when Kempton has a subject that is truly paradoxical, he, and we, are in Heaven. The classic instance is his 1967 essay in *Esquire* on Dwight D. Eisenhower, which changed the course of historians, if not of history. Because the man who liberated western Europe could not make faculty club conversation as well as Adlai Stevenson, he had been judged a dunce by those with the authority to make such judgments, including Kempton. But Kempton, in *Esquire*, took a second look, and broke the news of Ike's cunning. It is not the last word on Eisenhower: the question remains whether Eisenhower's guile served the country as well as it served him. But Kempton's piece was the word that had to be said before any other words could be.

Although there are long tracts of this book which have to be traversed with weary foot and bleary eye—the piece on the 1968 Democratic convention is New Journalism at its most self-indulgent; if you want Kempton on the civil rights movement, go to his other collection of columns, *America Comes of Middle Age* (1963)—even in the badlands, keep a look-out for freshets like these:

> Harry Truman's *Plain Speaking* is as powerful an argument for measured and restrained discourse as *Deep Throat* must be for long underwear.

> Alger Hiss always made his debut escorted by the gods: He came to Washington with a reference from Felix Frankfurter and he went to Lewisburg [penitentiary] with a reference from Frank Costello.

> Every now and then, in the course of great events, the elements of tradition and innovation ally themselves and each one's weakness supplements the other and together they achieve the perfect debacle.

> Terrorism had been this lovely word and now it was this horrid deed . . . whose reeking flower is the death of two policemen, either of whom, if he had seen Kathy Boudin at a loss on the street, would have come up to her and, with great respect, inquired, "Is there anything I can do for you, Miss?"

And then, two-thirds of the way through the book, five home runs in a row, on the subjects of Marilyn Monroe, an S&M murder, an attempted murder-for-hire, an ancient Sicilian city, and Soviet architecture. Pegler would be proud to have made them. ❐

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THANK YOU FOR SMOKING

Christopher Buckley

Random House / 272 pages / $22

reviewed by AMOS BLOOD

It is a truism for our times that the power of satire to ridicule folly and humbug lags behind the power of folly and humbug to pretend that they are not ridiculous at all. Parody falls short of reality. Not long ago, no novelist could have portrayed a powerful subcommittee chairman summoning the heads of the seven largest tobacco companies solemnly to testify before Congress that they do not believe cigarettes a hazard to health. But now Representative Henry Waxman has done it in reality and has been hailed as a bold defender of the public health.

Or consider the debates in the House on health care reform, which many seem to think can be paid for, in large part, by new federal taxes on cigarettes. In debating whether to raise the tax by $1.25 a pack or only 45 cents, Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark of California called the kingpins of the tobacco industry "worse than criminals" (bad indeed!), while Rep. Robert Matsui, also of California—who claims to be a sort of tobacco orphan, since both his parents died of lung cancer—said that manipulation of the nicotine content of cigarettes was "a criminal offense" and that those said to have done it were "not really American citizens." Stark and Matsui, both Democrats, were speaking in favor of the *lower* tax but attempting to make up in rhetorical firepower for the fact that they needed the votes—on a health-care package!—of tobacco-state legislators for whom 45 cents a pack was the highest acceptable rate.

Meanwhile, Republicans had a great time suggesting that Stark, Matsui, and other Democrats who could not join their colleague, Michael Andrews of Texas, in branding as "unconscionable" any tax of less than $1.25 were "accomplices" in the criminal acts they so excoriated. What a laugh!

It sounds even less plausible than the situation in Christopher Buckley's new novel. *Thank You for Smoking* tells the story of Nick Naylor, "chief smokesman" for the tobacco industry, who is a brilliant improviser of public relations offensives but who becomes the victim of an intra-office plot. Buckley's satire manages to stay fresh and funny by averting its gaze, slightly—away from the appalling moral humbuggery of our elected representatives and towards the language and the manners of Washington flacks and Hollywood producers and rich captains of provincial industry. At least the latter have the excuse that no one ever expected anything of them other than that their exquisitely nuanced points of view should be calculated out of dollars and cents.

Buckley has a particularly good eye for Washington ways of euphemism. Nick meets regularly with two other lobbyists in what they good-naturedly call the "MOD [for "Merchants of Death"] squad. His colleagues are Bobby Jay Bliss of SAFETY, or the Society for the Advancement of Firearms and Effective Training of Youth (formerly the National Right to Bear Arms Committee) and Polly Bailey of the Moderation Council (formerly the National Association for Alcoholic Beverages).

Nick's great triumph occurs when he appears on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" with several anti-tobacco fanatics and a personable young man who is dying of lung cancer. In this nightmarish situation he manages to turn aside the attack on smoking by singling out the government's health spokesman as the object of a counteroffensive.

> If Mr. Goode wants to score cheap points off this young man's suffering just so he can get his budget increased so he can tell more people what to do, well I just think that's really, really sad. But for a member of the federal government to come on this show and lecture about cancer, when that same government for nearly fifty years has been producing atomic bombs, twenty-five thousand of them, as long as we're throwing numbers around, Mis-ter Sta-tistics, bombs capable of giving every single person on this planet, man, woman, and child, cancers so awful, so ghastly and untreatable, so, so, so *incurable*, that medical science doesn't even have a name for them yet . . . is . . . just beneath contempt.

But the most delicious of Buckley's scenes come out of Hollywood:

> First Class was full. There was a lot of traffic back and forth between D.C. and L.A. these days. He recognized Barbra Streisand's issues person, whom he'd read had flown in to brief the National Security Council on Barbra's position on the developing Syrian situation. Richard Dreyfuss's issues person was also on board, having given a presentation to the cabinet on Richard's feelings about health reform.

How far can this be considered parody when both Dreyfuss and Miss Streisand actually do employ "issues persons"?

Nick is in Hollywood to negotiate a deal for "product placement." For an eye-popping amount of money to be paid by the tobacco companies, the hot young stars of a new movie will be shown smoking. Buckley claims not to have known when he was writing the book that precisely this kind of thing has in fact gone on for years in the movie business.

Jeff Megall, the superagent with whom Nick is negotiating, is perhaps Buckley's most perfectly observed character. Product placement is to Megall a matter of money being "all along a byproduct of the creative decision," and, he says smugly, "It's nice when that happens." Nick is impressed. "The man made it sound as though product place-

Amos Blood appears frequently in these pages.

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ment was crucial to character development. *Call me Ishmael, and hand me a Coca-Cola.*"

While the Hollywood types and the tycoons and the "public interest" spokesmen are full to the back teeth with humbug, Nick has a solid center of genuineness. He is aware of what he is doing, and sometimes hates himself for it. True, it seems to me too easy for Buckley in the end to make him a conscientious convert to the anti-smoking cause—and the plot intrigue by which this turnabout is effected is ultimately irrelevant and distracting. But my judgment may be clouded by dislike for anything which gives comfort to the anti-smoking Puritans. Whatever its shortcomings, the novel scores a big success in making the ridiculous look utterly like itself. ❐

MRS. THATCHER'S MINISTER: THE PRIVATE DIARIES OF ALAN CLARK

Alan Clark

Farrar, Straus & Giroux / 421 pages / $35

reviewed by CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

Alan Clark is the son of the British art historian Kenneth Clark (author of *Civilisation*), heir to a nine-figure textile fortune that dates to the last century, and author of several well-received military histories, chief among them *Barbarossa*, an account of the Russo-German conflict in World War II. After a decade in Parliament, he joined Margaret Thatcher's government, first as minister of trade, later as minister of state for defense. While he could lay claim for a while to being one of Thatcher's mid-level favorites, Clark was hardly—as the bizarre title for the American edition of his diaries would have it—"Mrs. Thatcher's Minister."

On the contrary, he quickly established himself as a sort of Westminster wildman. He was dry enough to refer to the Third World as "Bongo-Bongo Land," and wet enough to risk his entire political future to author a bill protecting baby seals. He presented himself blind drunk at his first ministerial appearance before Parliament, and played a still-not-fully-divulged role in the Matrix Churchill affair, which involved the connivance of British government officials in selling a "supergun" to Saddam Hussein.

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In Clark's first days in the Thatcher government, cabinet secretary Sir Robert Armstrong called him into his office to ask about "certain matters of personal conduct that could leave you open to blackmail." That Clark was able to deflect the inquiry with an off-the-cuff remark about all of them having married into grand Scottish families does not change the fact that of all the dozens of ministers who moved in and out of the endlessly reshuffled Thatcher governments, Clark is by far the one whose intimate thoughts one would most like to read.

Should Clark be applauded for his indomitability or rebuked for his turpitude? "I am not in the slightest degree aroused by 'the older woman,'" he writes, drifting toward his seventieth birthday. "They are fun to sit next to at dinner, but I don't want to get any closer. For me, girls have to be succulent, and that really means under twenty-five." All well and good, but there were apparently few women who were not in Clark's sights while he was minister. Of his first meeting with Margaret Thatcher, he writes, "I radiated protective feelings—and, indeed, feelings of another kind(s). She has very small feet and attractive—not bony—ankles in the 1940 style."

Clark claims to have twenty-eight more volumes of diaries in this vein, and the publication of this one alone has already been the stuff of scandal in London. Last May, *News of the World* broke the story that three of the women Clark boasts of bedding in this volume—"the coven," he calls them—were actually the wife of an expatriate English judge, and her two daughters. While Clark's friends were quick to dismiss the blackmail element Armstrong raised, one of the daughters now lives with Sergei Kauzov, the former KGB agent who was married to the late Christina Onassis.

But that was nothing as compared to the miniature class war that was launched when Clark's long-suffering wife told a journalist: "Quite frankly, if you bed people I call 'below-stairs class' they go to the papers, don't they?" To which Steven Glover replied in the *Evening Standard*, "Who is she to speak this way? She is the daughter of a Colonel Beuttler, whose name does not figure in any edition of *Burke's Landed Gentry* that I can find."

In the time he was able to spare from his amorous adventures, Clark had a ringside seat at all of the British political milestones of the last decade: the 1984 miners' strike; the 1986 Westland military procurement scandal; the Gulf War; the 1990 abandonment of Thatcher by her own party.

Even those who have watched British politics closely for the past decade will find it hard to make sense of Clark's clipped descriptions, which make the same assumption of readerly omniscience as H.R. Haldeman's diaries. (But the footnotes are helpful.) That Clark is, to say the least, more inclined than Haldeman to filter public events through the lens of personal interest causes more trouble, and the hermetic dialect of Clark's own class, combined with a blizzard of terms of art from British parliamentary politics, will ultimately bury the American reader.

But the book is chock full of insights into the bureaucratic Darwinism of modern government. Here is a Public Expenditure Survey in September 1983—the high tide of Thatcherism:

> Was finally goaded by Fred Bayliss, the Under Secretary, who appears to be our resident Chief Accountant. He mumbled along, ". . . looks as if there is going to

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be a shortfall as our overall provision is £408 million and at present we are going to be [hard-pressed] to get expenditure over £335-360 million."

That's not a f---ing "shortfall" I thought, or at least not my idea of one. . . . "Look, Fred, Ministers in this Department are members of a Government which is dedicated to—whose *raison d'être*, you could say, is—the reduction of public expenditure. Surely it's a matter for congratulation?"

Ah no, don't you see—"It's important to get as close as possible to last year's provision in order to have a firm base from which to argue for increases this year . . ."

. . . Icily I asked in what other Departments of State "is this kind of budgetary practice prevalent?"

"All of them," they shouted triumphantly.

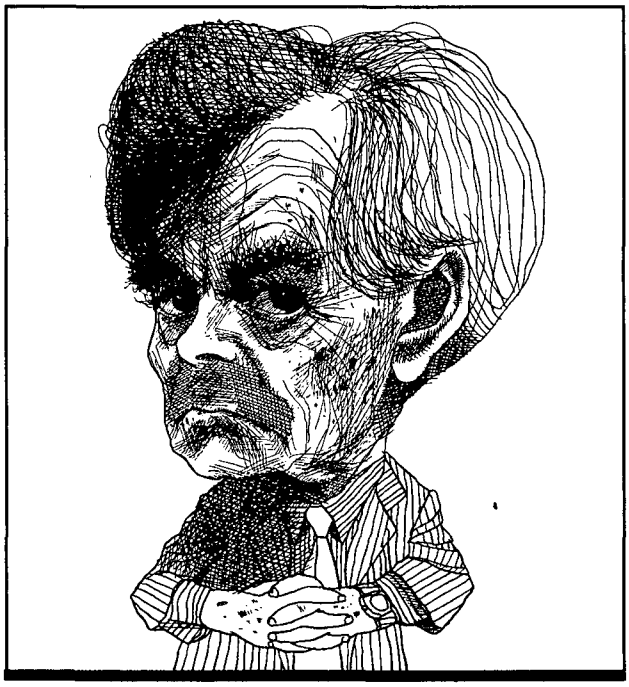
General laughter, of a *tee-hee* kind.

Clark also distinguished himself as a defender of British sovereignty against the encroachments of the European Community:

> The Lady is going to make a speech at Bruges on the occasion of some Euro-anniversary or other. The Eurocreeps have written for her a really loathsome text, wallowing in rejection of our own national identity. . . . They even managed to delete a ritual obeisance to Churchill, his ideals, all that and substituted the name of [EC founding father Robert] *Schuman*. Really!

These are areas where high Toryism is at one with the sensible classical liberalism that passes for American conservatism. But they are only chance affinities, and conditional ones at that. Clark is better thought of as part of the High Tory contingent that rode like a remora on the liberal shark of Thatcherism. Clark complains on more than one occasion about "the democratic overhead," which, if I'm not mistranslating, is a reference to the cost of underwriting the public's belief that they have a say in their government, to the end of making certain they have none. He and some of his fellow Etonians speak explicitly and often about the need to get more people "of our sort" into positions of power; and some of his fellow cabinet ministers raise their worries about there being so many "jewboys" in the cabinet. And Clark's keen championing of the prerogatives of government in general—he criticizes Thatcher's most market-oriented adviser, David (Lord) Young, for being "a little too ready to 'devolve' to the private sector; not seeing that this can cheapen the responsibilities of Government in more than one sense"—will be anathema to the American right.

Clark's animosity toward the United States—and Americans of all stripes—seems profound. This is more an inference than an observation: it merely seems odd that Clark should so fastidiously record the minutiae of Bogota's airport or a dinner party in British Columbia and have so little to say



about, for instance, Presidents Carter and Reagan, aside from gleefully recounting that Margaret Thatcher "was *astonished* at how stupid they were. 'Can they really dispose of all that power?'" And here is Clark describing a meeting with U.S. ambassadors Jeane Kirkpatrick and Thomas Enders in the aftermath of the Falklands War:

> I was curious to meet this Anglophobe harridan. She, and a tall, albino official at the State Department called Enders (whom Willie used to call "the White Rabbit") were adamantly, subversively pro-Galtieri during the Falklands crisis. . . . The line is, she's so clever, she's an academic really, all that s---. But where was she? . . . Finally she appeared, a mixture between Irene Worth and Eleanor Roosevelt. Immediately began "putting it away." . . .
>
> Odious, totally stalinist, humourless. Trotted out the Party line, consequential sentences, no rationale at all. . . . loathsome.

But if there is an impenetrability to Clark's book for Americans, it has less to do with his vocabulary or ethnic preferences than with something in the English national character. For lack of a better term, one could call it an unreconstructed ruralism, which in Clark's case is so pronounced as to verge on paganism. (He is, in fact, very fond of the word.) Clark tends to imbue the physical world with all manner of mystical attributes. Of the photos he reproduces in the book, two are of his dog, and most of the remainder of his various houses, castles, and cars. His biggest fright in the book comes not on any of the numerous occasions when he fears he has lost his job, but on one when he fears he has lost his dog. The worst tears he weeps in the whole book come not when his father dies or after a particularly egregious betrayal of his wife, but when he shoots a heron that has been poaching fish from his castle moat:

> I cursed and blubbed up in my bedroom, as I changed into jeans and a T-shirt. I was near a nervous breakdown. Yet if it had been a burglar or a vandal I wouldn't have given a toss. It's human beings that are the vermin.

He is obsessed with the physical world, above all with his physical performance, timing himself against other climbers when walking up a hill, figuring out how much sleep he can dispense with, counting the number of lovers he can have in a day. Like most satyriacs, Clark is sensitive to the point of neurasthenia and valetudinarian to the point of hypochondria—he has never smoked a cigarette and suffers, for some deep-seated psychological reason, from a sort of urological impotence that makes it impossible for

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him to urinate in public restrooms. He not only makes loving reference to his bowel movements (in family slang, as "thompsons") but actually *ranks* them. During a boating accident on the Danube, he writes, "I did manage a 'formal' thompson, one ranking for the *extremis* star along with the all time winner—under the trucks at Ascension Island."

Not surprisingly in a man of Clark's faith, *timor mortis* pounds through the narrative like the drums of Bongo-Bongo Land:

> In summer and late spring it becomes oppressive and fetid. I get sudden, intermittent—like twinges of pain—realisations of how old I am becoming. I spring in my step, look at girls, like laughs and fresh ideas. But . . . what is my life expectancy? Fifteen years? If I spend two-thirds of that in London, or in the Constituency . . . what have I got left? Effectively—five.
>
> At what stage does one's reserve of years change from being inexhaustible—of no concern or consequence—into a rapidly diminishing triangle of sand at the neck of the glass, which is scrutinised obsessively?
>
> Yesterday, at lunch time, I drove the [Rolls Royce] SS 100 still, forty years on, getting that wonderful evocative thrill as I settle into the driving seat and look down the long louvered bonnet.
>
> At the Princes Gate traffic lights out of Hyde Park I drew up beside a black BMW, driven by a blonde, registered ANY 1. I looked sideways and saw browner, thinner in the face, but still with "something," Andy Colquhoun.
>
> As the lights went amber the faithful SS, always unbeatable for the first fifty feet of a standing start, yelped the racing diamond tread of its 18-inch wheels, and was off—the BM [sic] was nowhere. She pursued me, screeching the revs to ignition cut-out, but locked brakes and overshot the right turn to the Albert Hall.
>
> Had Andy recognised me? Or have I changed too much?

At the end, as Clark goes gamely down with the Thatcherite ship, loneliness, bitterness, and political cynicism combine in pages and pages of eloquent political narrative, a tour de force to which no quoting could do justice. One assumes that the English reviewers who have acclaimed this book an instant classic have done so for this kind of elegiac grace, far more than the cloakroom gossip or the dirty bits. ❐

CONSTITUTIONAL OPINIONS

(continued from page 61)

"equal opportunity" and "civil rights." But the court's civil libertarian zeal (on those days when it isn't distracted) is not entirely reassuring, either. Liberal champions of "civil liberty" remain strong for free speech on some days, too. Sometimes they are so strong as to seem a bit unhinged—but they have often carried the court along here, too. So, even while carving new exceptions into the First Amendment, the court has been ready to extend its reach in remarkable ways in recent decades. The flaunting of four-letter Anglo-Saxon words on the back of a jacket turned out to be a "mode of expression" protected by the First Amendment (*Cohen* v. *California*, 1971). Also the display of naked bodies on the huge screens of drive-in theaters (*Erznoznik* v. *Jacksonville*, 1975). Also the burning of the American flag (*U.S.* v. *Eichman*, 1990).

A few years ago, Senator Jesse Helms publicized the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts was funding, among other curiosities, a photograph of a crucifix in a jar of urine. When Congress tried to prevent the NEA from funding such assaults on the sensibilities of Christian taxpayers, prominent legal authorities insisted that such restrictions would be unconstitutional. But let the government fund a church group counseling sexual abstinence—as it did in *Bowen* v. *Kendrick* (1988)—and the same legal authorities (joined by four justices of the Supreme Court) insist that this is also an intolerable affront to the First Amendment. And why not? The Supreme Court now holds that the First Amendment protects flag burning—but permits the imposition of special penalties on someone who burns leaves with racist intent.

The First Amendment has come to be such a hodge-podge of confused impulses that it no longer seems to have any moral coherence. As it figures in contemporary jurisprudence, it is often so removed from its historic purpose of guaranteeing open and informed civic debate that it seems open to almost any new turn. I am no longer so sure what to expect. Maybe it would be safer for the Seattle citizens and others caught up in HUD's censorship program to deny that they are ordinary Americans, claim instead to be misunderstood Nazis and throw themselves on the mercies of the ACLU. ❐

RUSSIA WATCH

(continued from page 66)

traps. It has been characterized, on the on hand, by the worst of statism: arbitrary bu reaucratic control over the key levers of th economy, leading inevitably to massiv corruption; confiscatory taxes which stran gle businessmen or turn them into ta cheats, making them easy pickings fo criminals. On the other hand, it has fea tured the worst of laissez-faire—for exam ple, law enforcement's absolute unwilling ness or inability to protect honest business men from predators. Or the government' failure to regulate—or at least inform th public about—scams like MMM.

While Russia's living standard has bee rising since 1993, its income gap ha reached Third World proportions. Mor dangerous, perhaps, is the even greater ga that has opened up between Moscow an the rest of the country. There is politica capital to be made off this growing geo graphical disparity: there's a lot of ange out there, one often hears. During his jour ney across Russia this summer Solzhenitsyn made it a point to take swipe at "pampered" and "privileged" Moscow In a recent press conference, Rutsko stressed that his new political party (called by the way, *Derzhava*—"Great Power") i one based "not inside the Garden Ring"— Moscow's Beltway—"but one whic comes from the provinces."

It may be that given the massive eco nomic, social and psychological dis tortions engendered by Communism, th transition to the market in Russia coul not have been anything other than a ugly, unfair, Hobbesian process. It ma be, too, that a change has taken place i the Russian psyche. Many commentator feared that the MMM fiasco woul spawn an anti-government, anti-marke backlash. In fact, a recent poll showe that a majority of MMM shareholder blame either the company or themselves not the government. This suggests tha more and more Russians accept the idea that under capitalism responsibility rest with the individual.

Nevertheless, capitalism *à la russe* ha left millions of people skeptical or dazed and the government still must steer the economy through the narrow channe between high inflation and mass unem ployment. Any sudden lurch could put the ultras back in business. It could even give Mad Vlad a new lease on life. ❐

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CORRESPONDENCE
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France as a member of an OSS team, during those dark days when countless acts of heroism were performed by ordinary people, makes me hope he is a better psychiatrist than he is a historian.

—J.A. de Francesco
Woodruff, South Carolina

Yale Kramer's article did a good job of recounting the actions at Omaha Beach during the 1944 Normandy invasion. However, it fell short concerning the actions of naval forces.

First, his only mention of naval bombardment is contained in a short paragraph that leaves the reader to believe that naval guns were virtually non-existent throughout the invasion. Saying that the pre-invasion bombardment lasted just "47 minutes" makes the reader wonder, "Why only 47 minutes?" Future historians must remember that the main key to this invasion was surprise. If naval bombardment had begun much earlier, the Nazis would have had more time to mobilize their Panzer divisions to the front. . . .

Second, Kramer says that "from 6,000 yards offshore it was difficult to fire accurately through the mist, dust and smoke." This was not totally true. The battleships and cruisers with larger drafts *were* confined to deeper waters, but not so for the smaller, more agile destroyers, or "tin cans," as they were called. The tin cans came in close to the beach during the Omaha part of the invasion and delivered accurate gunfire on a wide range of targets. There are several written accounts validating this. In fact, I met several veterans at the 50th anniversary celebrations in France who told of how their ships maneuvered in harm's way, sometimes in only nine feet of water, and rattled the enemy along the coastline (and without spotters ashore). Not only did they fire effectively, but drew enemy fire on themselves. Their actions enabled many troops who were pinned down at Omaha to finally advance in towards the bluffs. . . .

—Mark Phillips
LCDR, U.S. Naval Reserve
Parma, Ohio

Yale Kramer's article, "Day at the Beach," suggests that Americans today do not possess the requisite will and ruthlessness that carried the day at Normandy fifty years ago. His historical approach is fine as long as he stays with the events of June, 1944, but when he attributes cultural changes and the loss of individual characteristics (courage, honor, duty, loyalty and comradeship) to our less than spectacular foreign policy in Korea, Vietnam and Somalia he goes too far.

. . . In each of these cases, the lack of military success was the direct result of artificial restraints imposed by political considerations. "Clinical professor of psychiatry" Kramer's assertion that today's preoccupation with multiculturalism, sexual equality, et. al., has in effect emasculated our armed forces is theoretical psycho-babble. As a former combat infantryman in Vietnam when unit morale was non-existent and support "back home" was reflected in the media coverage given to daily anti-war demonstrations, I can assure you that the superfluous issues of race, poverty, and anything else are promptly put into perspective when your survival is interdependent with that of your fellow soldiers. I have to conclude that Kramer has no personal experience in this area.

—Roger Soiset
Lilburn, Georgia

Hang Him by the Deep Throat

Why was David Brock so gentle in his review of the latest Bob Woodward book (*TAS*, August 1994)? It is now well established that Woodward has at least one major fabrication in every book he has ever written. How far off track must wayward media people drift before losing professional courtesy privileges?

—Ken Rogers
Jamestown, North Carolina

Lost in Space

"Crash Course," Thomas Mallon's otherwise lucid reflection on the cataclysmic impact of Comet Shoemaker-Levy on Jupiter (*TAS*, July 1994), is marred by an observation that is both antihistorical and quantitatively unscientific. He refers to the asteroid impact that occurred at the end of the age of the dinosaurs (ca. 65 million B.C.) as having "set off a version of Nuclear Winter."

The asteroid impact hypothesis was adduced by Alvarez in 1980. It considered the cosmic dust-up arising from an event a *million* times more energetic than the explosive force of *all* the world's nuclear arsenals. The global fallout from this cataclysm at the end of the Cretaceous Period has been traced to the enormous (Ohio-sized) impact crater in the Yucatan.

Only subsequently did Carl Sagan and his colleagues postulate that globe-enshrouding dust and soot clouds could arise from a nuclear war. But research soon revealed that the amount of dust injected into the stratosphere in even the worst-case scenarios of a nuclear holocaust was far too small to engender the lethal deep freeze that was popularized by Sagan in 1984. Likewise, when Sagan postulated that catastrophic cooling might lead to famine in Asia in the aftermath of the sooty oil fires touched off by Saddam Hussein's forces in 1991, natural history swiftly falsified his hypothesis.

The global effects of nuclear war on climate have thus retreated to what John von Neumann reckoned them to be a generation ago—*de minimis*, considering the carnage required to engender them. But given the perjurability of videotape—Nuclear Winter has been immortalized as both icon and neologism in an episode of "Star Trek"—it seems unlikely that some billions and billions of television viewers will ever suspect that the end of the world isn't what it used to be.

—Russell Seitz
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Thomas Mallon's strained paean to the manned space program confused me a great deal. Upon reading it, I was unsure whether I was reading *The American Spectator*, or some liberal rag in which mere poetry is enough to justify outrageous waste of taxpayer dollars.

Starstruck space mavens like Mr. Mallon have encouraged manned exploration of the heavens for decades, despite the increasing sophistication and effectiveness of unmanned probes. Such probes will soon be able to return samples from comets, asteroids, the Moon, and Mars.

Unmanned spacecraft are cheaper than their manned counterparts by orders of magnitude, yet the megalomaniacs are obsessed with the grandeur of the Apollo years. Everyone was impressed with the race to the Moon, of course, but we

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DAVID BROCK
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been involved in the ouster of former RTC chief Albert Casey in March 1993, which put Altman in control of the agency. Shortly thereafter, the RTC reversed its position on extending the statute in the Madison case from favorable to opposed. Senate sources say that last November—shortly after word that the civil case was back in play reached the White House—Stephanopoulos was involved in a White House decision to pull the plug on the troubled nomination of Republican Stanley Tate to head the agency, leaving Altman in place for several more months.

The Jay Stephens Thicket

White House officials first learned of the Stephens hiring during the week of February 14. Steiner testified that he heard about it from either John Podesta or his deputy Todd Stern. Nussbaum testified that he also learned of it at this time and complained to other White House staffers of its unfairness. Neil Eggleston, a Nussbaum aide, called Hanson to find out how Stephens got hired. Steiner, too, contacted Hanson and asked how Ellen Kulka hired Stephens; he then passed on the information to the White House.

According to Hanson's deposition, Steiner called back and said that Ellen Kulka should be fired for hiring Stephens. Hanson also said Steiner suggested that the civil case be transferred from Kulka and Stephens and assigned to Robert Fiske—a suggestion that originated in early February with Nussbaum, who obviously believed that Fiske was less aggressive. (Interestingly, Steiner testified that Fiske did not ask him about these particular contacts with Hanson.) Finally, the Cutler chronology revealed that Clinton himself expressed concern to deputy chief of staff Ickes about Stephens.

Stephanopoulos testified that he first learned of the Stephens hiring on February 24 or 25. This is doubtful, since, even in the unlikely event that Stephanopoulos was unaware of the foregoing chain of events, as he testified, he could have learned of the Stephens hiring in the February 17 edition of the *Washington Post*, which reported that Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro, Stephens's firm, had been hired by the RTC to investigate civil claims against Madison.

Stephanopoulos testified that in two telephone conversations on the 25th, one with Altman (with Ickes on speakerphone) and one with Steiner, he merely inquired about how Stephens was hired. He said he also "blew off steam," since he believed Stephens was out to get Clinton for removing him and all other U.S. attorneys in February 1993. Note that in the same conversation, Altman revealed he was going to recuse himself from the Madison case, leaving Stephens unchecked.

Did Stephanopoulos's inquiries mean something more, particularly since the White House already knew not only that Stephens had been hired but also how? Three independent and mutually corroborating sources provided evidence suggesting Stephanopoulos's real motive. An entry in the Steiner diary, which Steiner was not able to convincingly disavow, read: "George then suggested to me that we needed to find a way to get rid of him [Stephens]." Altman testified that Stephanopoulos suggested firing Stephens. And Hanson testified that Steiner told her that people at the White House wanted to get rid of Stephens.

Stephanopoulos testified that he did not recall asking Steiner if the RTC could get rid of Stephens. But when asked "did you ever tell, request, ask, or suggest that Mr. Steiner or Mr. Altman or anyone else for that matter find a way to fire or get rid of Mr. Stephens," Stephanopoulos retreated to the nonresponsive assertion that he "never *directed* anyone to take any action to impede an investigation." He then insolently used the verb "directed" six more times, even after GOP Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah called attention to his ducking.

That answer should trigger a review by Starr of Stephanopoulos's role. Even if the contacts don't lead to an obstruction charge, Stephanopoulos's testimony—as well as that of many of the administration officials who testified in a cavalcade of poor recollections—may provide grounds for the filing of secondary charges, such as making false statements and lying to Congress. Can evidence be found that Stephanopoulos knew of the Stephens hiring before the 25th? Even if not, there are cases when "I don't recall"—a phrase used thirty-one times in Stephanopoulos's Senate deposition—would constitute perjury.

Roger Altman and Elliott Abrams

The main question before Fiske concerned Roger Altman's unsworn testimony February 26 before a congressional oversight hearing. In a curiously sweeping sentence that followed a more detailed section on obstruction, Fiske wrote, "We have also concluded that the evidence does not justify a criminal prosecution for violation of any other federal statute," an apparent reference to false statements charges. But the hearings produced hints that Fiske may not have seriously considered whether Altman's testimony was indictable. Bentsen, for instance, testified that Fiske did not even ask him about what he knew about the circumstances surrounding Altman's testimony.

Altman's claim that he knew of only one "substantive" contact, when in fact there were 40 White House–Treasury contacts, was a crimped and artificially constructed answer designed to mislead. But Fiske may have concluded that he could not prove that this was a lie. He therefore would have had to pursue a dicier charge that Altman withheld information from Congress—for example, when he failed to disclose that his recusal was discussed in the course of the contact.

This is the sort of charge that Iran-contra prosecutor Lawrence Walsh forced Reagan State Department official Elliott Abrams to plead guilty to. Perhaps Fiske reasonably does not think that withholding information from Congress in unsworn testimony is a crime, because if it is

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Altman is certainly guilty of it. If so, Fiske should have cleared the air and stated in the report that he was applying the standards of the Justice Department, and not the unjust standards of Walsh (who was Fiske's law partner in New York).

Fiske's conclusion notwithstanding, some banking committee lawyers believe a good case could still be made against Altman. The weakness of the Abrams case, which amounted to nothing more than the criminalizing of policy differences, ought not rule this out. First off, there is a difference between withholding information for a national security reason—Abrams had made an absolute pledge of confidentiality to a third country in a sensitive foreign policy initiative—and the situation in Whitewater, where there was a private reason for the withholding, arguably to conceal an abuse of power by high government officials for personal gain. Secondly, Altman's statements came while an investigation was proceeding, while Abrams's didn't. (The false statements charges filed against Oliver North and John Poindexter for their testimony during the Iran-contra investigation seem more warranted.)

Furthermore, Abrams's testimony came in response to an unexpected question for which he was not briefed, while a briefing memo for Altman specifically listed the recusal issue. (The White House expected a rough time. A "to do" list prepared by Podesta's shop said, "Line up a Senator or two (e.g. Boxer, Murray, Sarbanes) to counterpunch.") And lastly, on the sole point on which Abrams's testimony was wrong, no government official contacted him in the ensuing weeks to tell him so. Altman, on the other hand, was informed within a few days that his testimony was incorrect and continued to fail to correct it.

The Foster Suicide

Second-guessing prosecutors, of course, is difficult if not impossible; prosecutors assess the likelihood of success differently, and Fiske did not present his evidence, citing grand jury secrecy rules. But in the one aspect of his investigation where he did publish his evidence, the death of Vincent Foster, Fiske's methods don't inspire confidence.

Fiske regarded the testimony of the so-called confidential witness who discovered Foster's body as highly credible in establishing certain facts, such as the time of death and the position of the body. Yet he gave no credence to the witness's statement that there was no gun in Foster's hand when he came upon the body, which may have contradicted Fiske's predetermined conclusions. If the witness had credibility problems, Fiske's judgment in taking his word for anything without further sourcing is suspect. If not, *all* of his story should have been weighed.

Another problem concerns Fiske's conclusion that although Foster's head was "straight up" when found, a blood stain on his right cheek that came from contact with the shoulder of his blood-stained shirt indicated that the head must have been moved by someone who came upon the body before the confidential witness. But Fiske couldn't find any such person. Moreover, he appears to have made no effort to determine the source of carpet fibers and hairs found on Foster's clothing, nor did he even mention that semen was found on Foster's undershorts. Incredibly, the prosecutor did not bother interviewing the pathologist who conducted Foster's autopsy.

All of this is not to suggest that Foster was murdered or that he died somewhere other than where his body was discovered. Rather, it shows that by failing to convincingly lay to rest the niggling inconsistencies surrounding the death scene, the Fiske report in its sloppiness and lack of initiative provided fodder for conspiracy theorists. And if Fiske couldn't be trusted on the little things, Starr is going to have to start from scratch on the big ones. On the most important question before him—why Foster killed himself—Fiske concluded emphatically that Whitewater played no role. Yet according to those who have seen it, the Fiske deposition of Bill and Hillary Clinton shows that he didn't ask the first couple if they had spoken to Foster about Whitewater before his death.

A bigger question still is whether the White House obstructed the investigation of Foster's death. Fiske was replaced before he could issue findings. But the few bits of evidence that emerged in the hearing made it look as if the administration had interfered with the investigation, as the park police's chief criminal investigator, Charles Hume, told the Senate in a sworn deposition. Hume was supposed to testify but mysteriously didn't show up. Park police investigator John Rolla testified that a police sergeant called him at home the evening of the death and ordered him to turn over the key to his desk to the Secret Service—or it would be busted open. In addition to personal effects, the desk contained Foster's White House pager, which would have stored the numbers called in that day even if turned off. It might have been a way to chart Foster's movements during the five hours or so between the time he left the White House and his death, had investigators preserved the numbers. Rolla told the sergeant where to locate the spare key, the Secret Service took the pager, and this evidence was lost.

We now know where this trail is likely to lead: right into the Oval Office. The Secret Service was acting on orders from the president, Rolla said.

Li'l Abner in Dogpatch

Worse still for Clinton, in this next round he won't have the services of a smoothie like Cutler to pull the wool over everyone's eyes. Cutler's replacement as White House counsel, one of the few top jobs in government where one actually has to do one's own thinking and writing, is Judge Abner Mikva, a former Democratic congressman. Mikva is neither a skilled lawyer nor a distinguished judge; he spent most of his time clumsily attempting to use his position as chief judge of the D.C. circuit to fix the outcomes of cases by importing liberal "visiting" judges to stack the three-judge panels. Think of him as the Henry Gonzalez of the Court of Appeals. ❐

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CORRESPONDENCE
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haven't gone back because there exists no compelling, economically viable reason to do so.

We continue to waste money unnecessarily on frequent Space Shuttle missions and the Space Station. The funds that have disappeared down those black holes could have been spent on satellites to continuously monitor the Earth's environment, thus debunking a dozen eco-myths about ozone, global warming, and other dementia. And we could have had a permanent satellite orbiting Jupiter to study the impact of Shoemaker-Levy 9 up close. And we could have a real heavy-lift booster capable of launching an actual ballistic missile defense system.

I've had enough of spacey advocates who want a return to manned exploration of the heavens, all in the name of "reaching out" to our planetary neighbors—as if they were some galactic minority group. Instead, let's make our decisions about the direction of the space program on the basis of the facts and real policy analysis.

—John S. Morgan
House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Paging Pierre

I thoroughly enjoyed Christopher Byron's recent article on Pierre Salinger ("Who'll Start the Rain?" *TAS*, August 1994). I witnessed Mr. Salinger's true character in the late 1960s at a hotel on the island of Nassau, in the Bahamas, where I had the occasion to observe Pierre walk over to the hotel desk and ask that the hotel "page Mr. Pierre Salinger." He then walked out to the pool and patio area to bask in his self-aggrandizement.

—Donald R. Lorelli
Wilton, Connecticut

Behind the Orange Curtain

Recent attacks on the "Religious Right" (a.k.a. "Christian Right," "Radical Right," or "Extreme Right") by Democrats have evidently struck a deep nerve among conservative and Republican politicos and pundits. Ever since DNC Chairman David Wilhelm and DCCC Chairman Vic Fazio came out swinging against the "Religious Right" back in June, newspapers, magazines, and talk shows of conservative opinion have been responding with creative fervor.

These responses generally fall into four categories: (a) There is no such thing as the religious right, it's just a figment of Wilhelm and Fazio's desperate imaginations; (b) The religious right is not an extremist group at all; (c) The Republican Party is not dominated or unduly influenced by the religious right, it's a diverse and tolerant party; and (D) Democrats have their own extremists to worry about. Obviously, these responses cannot all be true. Nevertheless, this hasn't stopped pols and pundits from using as many of them as can be squeezed into a single rebuke of Wilhelm and Fazio's clarion call to electoral arms.

Elements of the last three responses appear in R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.'s most recent ventilation against the Democratic Party ("Houston Democrats," *TAS*, August 1994). In essence, Tyrrell argues that the Democrats should get their own house in order before "selflessly warning Republicans of the danger posed to them by the Christian Right!" Tyrrell could well have a point. But it's not just Democrats who have serious concerns about the "Religious Right" or who worry about the sanity of the Republican Party for embracing the right. Republicans have been every bit as active in sounding the alarm against the Religious Right in *their* party as have certain Democrats.

This is certainly the case in Virginia and Texas and has been going on for some time in Pennsylvania courtesy of Senator Arlen Specter and in California due to Governor Pete Wilson. Wilson and other moderate Republicans have successfully managed to fend off (and survive) the influence of the Religious Right. However, the Religious Right has been much more successful at colonizing the GOP at the local level.

Intra-party squabbling has been particularly severe in Orange County, California, where Republicans reign supreme, but where moderate local elected officials and party activists have been fighting a rear-guard action against the Christianization of the county's GOP constabulatory. This conflict erupts regularly, brought on by Republicans themselves, not "selfless" Democratic critics. For a Democrat living behind the Orange Curtain, it's a joy to witness and reason enough for Wilhelm, et al. not to sit idly by and let moderate Republicans have all the fun.

—Mark P. Petracca
Irvine, California

Miss Peggy

Reviewers of Peggy Noonan's books (Thomas Mallon, *TAS*, July 1994) usually seem disappointed that the goddess of the Normandy beaches and a thousand points of light turns out to be human after all.

But I recall driving home one evening back in the early eighties and hearing Dan Rather talk about "the virtues" on his daily radio commentary. I shall always remember the exact spot on the freeway that I heard the words that Peggy wrote and the spine-tingling excitement of hearing a conservative code-word from the lips of a man who couldn't say "Ron-*h*-ald Reagan" without choking. There will always be a special place in my heart for Peggy Noonan.

—Chris Chantrill
Seattle, Washington

Bloodworth Gall

For years Astronomers and Cosmologists have sought the elusive dark matter, that missing 90 percent of total mass required to balance the gravitational equation of the expansion of the universe. In her reply to David Brock's article on Travelgate (Correspondence, *TAS*, August 1994), Linda Bloodworth-Thomason has revealed its manifestation: Her Ego!

—H.F. Biggs, Jr.
Blountville, Tennessee

I don't know how it is in the Ozarks, but down in the Tidewater we have a saying "If you have to *explain* yo' gentility, YOU AIN'T!"

—Ben Gardner
Hull, Massachusetts

Rascal Randall

Chris Caldwell's suggestion ("Aristide Development," *TAS*, July 1994) that Randall Robinson was primarily interested in restoring Aristide to power should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with Mr. Robinson's idea of Caribbean heroes. Cheddi Jagan, Fidel Castro, Maurice Bishop, and the Sandinistas have all won his praise and support, and Rwanda is but the latest African trouble spot he has ignored. He failed to attend any of the congressional hearings on Somalia, and the devastating civil wars in Liberia and Sudan seem to have escaped any serious attention. He has never put in an appearance at any of the National Press Club gatherings of Non-Governmental

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Organizations operating in Africa, nor did he seem to notice last January when sixty unfortunate political prisoners suffocated to death in one of Omar Bongo's ghastly Gabonese jails. Years ago his odd view of what constitutes human rights became apparent when he failed to speak out against Julius Nyerere's assault on the Indian community in Tanzania, an assault Mr. Robinson's African idol and mentor said was "designed to cut them off at their knees." This shabby record prompted one Ugandan observer to note last year that Trans-Africa could more appropriately be named Trans-Soweto.

But with the South African drama receding from center stage, I suspect that Mr. Robinson realized that he was going to have to come up with a new emotional issue to pull at the heart and purse strings of his radical-chic supporters, and I don't imagine it took too long to realize that Rwanda wasn't going to cut it. Two pounds in a one pound bag would seem to describe this self-serving rascal very nicely.

—Blair Hunter
Bradenton, Florida

Quayle Quorum

In his review of *Standing Firm*, Victor Gold rightly characterizes Dan Quayle's service as vice president as most skillful, full of "sound policy and shrewd political counsel" (*TAS*, July 1994). However, he later falls prey to a common journalistic misconception when he disparages Mr. Quayle for defending himself against the overheated "gaffe patrol" that tormented him throughout the Bush years. Far from yearning to "be understood," in his memoirs Dan Quayle adopts the tone of the proud warrior fighting for restoration of the reputation that had been so unfairly taken from him. For that he deserves to be applauded. . . .

—Dan V. Jackson
Dallas, Texas

It's sad to see Victor Gold fall for the media line on Dan Quayle. That plays into the hands of the purveyors of liberal *Kultursmog*. In doing so, Gold sounds like all those blue-blooded Republicans who denigrated Quayle while looking down their noses at his unfashionable conservative positions. Nevertheless, *Standing Firm* is perched on the best-seller lists, and being read by a whole bunch of people who don't share Mr. Gold's disdain. Who would have guessed, for instance, that Quayle would come in fourth in the June 24, 1994 Iowa state Republican convention straw poll, after Bob Dole, Lamar Alexander, and Phil Gramm, but ahead of everyone else, including Jack Kemp, Pat Buchanan, Lynn Martin, Tom Kean, Arlen Specter, and others?

Quayle's only real enemies reside among liberal Democrats and their lapdogs in the national media who reserve their special contempt for him in the same manner as they did for Richard Nixon. . . .

Gold complains that Quayle is guilty of the sin of "blindsiding your political friends." Tut, tut, Victor. Read the book again and see how those "political friends" treated Mr. Quayle. . . .

The fact is, Quayle will be the best Republican Presidential candidate in 1996. . . .

—Timothy Condon
Tampa, Florida

Outer Limits

I am a little disturbed to read in Terry Eastland's "Future Limits" column (*TAS*, August 1994) that he believes that a constitutional amendment is needed to shrink the size of the federal government. I submit that we do not need any new parts to the Constitution; what's needed is to enforce the excellent Constitution that we have now.

Eastland notes that Article One of the Constitution clearly enumerates a *very* few powers held by the Federal government but does not mention that the Tenth Amendment in the Bill of Rights quite explicitly forbids the Federal government from usurping power in other areas. Our current elected and appointed officials, from the lowest petty bureaucrat to the president himself, have sworn an oath to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States" and violate this oath every time they exercise, or permit others to exercise, powers not granted by the Constitution. Our government is a government of perjurers and oath-breakers; it is time for us to call them on it. . . .

—Kenneth Mitchell
Citrus Heights, California

There is a precedent in this country for the super-majority method proposed by Mr. Eastland for passing spending bills. The Confederate Constitution contained a provision that required a two-thirds majority of both houses to pass major appropriations legislation. The architects of the Rebel government also included term limits and gave the president the line veto. From the standpoint of Federalists, both old and new, this document was and is an improvement over the original 1787 model, minus the indefensible protections of slavery. So for at least part of its history, in part of its borders, this country was governed by fiscal restraint. It is interesting to consider that the difficulty this posed to future Treasury looters may have caused the ancestors of the likes of Senator Byrd to put their fiddles down and rush to Wheeling to vote for the Union. But this is just speculation. . . .

—J. M. McArdle
Gibsonia, Pennsylvania

It comes as no surprise to read in Terry Eastland's "Future Limits" that conservatives have concluded that the task of reducing big government is hopeless. My own experience is that any serious attempt to reduce government in a fundamental way is beyond even the conservative imagination.

The cornerstone of big government is no mystery: it was the passage of the Sixteenth Amendment. It should come as no surprise that a government given essentially unlimited access to the national pocketbook chooses to spend from it. Having given our nationally elected officials the means to buy the favor of their constituents, we cannot realistically expect them to be consistent about anything except buying as many favors as they need to be elected. Nor can we expect those who *get* what is taken to vote against getting more of it. Term limits, balanced budget amendments, sunset legislation, and the like are all worthy band aids but none are a likely cure for the cancer of national taxation.

The Founders wisely chose not to provide in the Constitution for many national taxes save those, such as customs duties, clearly involving the nation's external dealings. It was assumed that the principal taxing powers would remain whether they are most accessible to voters, with the communities and the states. Most importantly, the taxing power was vested within jurisdictions from which those who disagreed with the actions of the states could readily remove themselves—without becoming expatriates.

The citizens of the *states* retain what the citizens of the United States have lost: that most important vote of all, the right to "vote with their feet" when the policies of a

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given locale prove intolerable. To this day the loss of population or commerce serves as the most effective check on foolish governance, as exemplified several years ago by the instant total departure of truck sales from New Jersey in response to Governor Florio's ill-conceived truck sales tax. . . .

Even though I am regarded by most who know me as a logical, sensible person, when the subject of repealing the Sixteenth Amendment is raised the effect is instantaneous: *he's gone off his rocker* say the incredulous stares.

"How would we pay for all the programs already in place and what could we do about the national debt?" is the first reaction. When it is suggested that a repeal act entitling the federal government to a share of state and local taxes initially equivalent to its current share of total taxes, then reducing that share by, say, one percent a year down to some minimum required to cover such agreed national burdens as defense, would provide a sufficiently elastic segue back to state-centric taxation, they say "Congress will never pass an amendment giving up their power."

Of course not. But the states can initiate the amendment process, and assuming that anyone remembers that we are still a federation of states they have every incentive to so do. Is it unreasonable to ask in what way would state governors and legislatures suffer by being the *source* of funds for Congress instead of the whining supplicants for federal largesse that they are in the present circumstance? . . .

Changing the constitution is an inherently risky act. As we learned with that other well-intentioned amendment, for Prohibition, sometimes there is no solution but to admit our error and correct the mistake with repeal. Where the Sixteenth Amendment is concerned, why do we find it virtually impossible to even talk about it?

—George Warren Schiele
Orlando, Florida

Home School Ties

When I read Grover G. Norquist's "Home Rule" in the June *Spectator* I was, initially, offended. Then I thought about it and realized that I shouldn't take umbrage at the word *fringe* ("fringe coalition of small moderate and liberal home-schoolers"), since all of us home-schoolers are called that by devotees of the mainstream public school system. It's the old if you're ten steps ahead you're a lunatic; if you're two steps ahead you're a leader.

However, although I took no offense, I would like to clear up a factual matter. I am a member of the "fringe coalition of small moderate and liberal home-schoolers" that opposed Michael Farris's position, but I'm neither a moderate nor a liberal. Liberals even call me conservative—although I'm not a fundamentalist Christian—and I, like many others in the "coalition," did write protest letters to my congressmen. What the spokespeople for the "fringe coalition" home-schoolers sought was educational freedom, and they saw Farris's attempts to speak on behalf of all home-schoolers as threatening—just as Farris saw the Miller amendment as threatening.

—N.S. Gill
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Great Bill Casey

Fred Barnes concludes his review of Peter Schweizer's *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (*TAS*, August 1994) with the observation that William Casey was perhaps more responsible for Reagan's successful anti-Soviet policy than Reagan himself. That would have been consistent with Casey's accomplishments during the Second World War. Indeed, Casey had a habit of understanding his superiors' strategic needs, and fashioning effective ways to realize them.

As a minor administrative functionary of the Office of Strategic Services mission in London during autumn 1944, Casey rapidly grasped that his leaders were spinning their wheels in vain attempts at launching an espionage campaign against Germany following the Normandy campaign. Casey then wrote a persuasive memo to outpost chief David Bruce in September 1944 outlining the pressing need to utilize OSS/London's as yet dormant capacity for pooling its fragmented intelligence assets in coordinated espionage against the Reich. Alone among OSS/ London's staff, Casey identified the outpost's debilitating shortcomings, and developed a workable operational plan. By December, he was elevated to the post of Chief, Secret Intelligence branch, and given authority over OSS/ London's resuscitated espionage penetration of Germany; by war's end, SI had launched 102 agent insertions, over three times that managed by the more established British clandestine services, MI6 and the Special Operations Executive. The innovations he developed enabled OSS to provide significant tactical intelligence desired by U.S. military forces in the war's closing months. The penetration of Germany was thus Casey's brainchild, and his success. He nevertheless refrained from claiming full credit in his posthumous memoir, *The Secret War Against Hitler*, instead paying homage to his wartime hero, OSS founder William J. Donovan.

This was a Casey trademark—loyalty to his boss (Clintonistas, take note). Equally significant was the ability to see what had to be done, and getting on with it (*El Presidenté*, take note); to identify what the boss needed, and making it so. Whatever the political motivation behind the demonization of both Casey and the Reagan administration's approach to winning the Cold War, the weight of empirical evidence now available in the U.S. National Archives' OSS collection clearly shows that Casey was particularly well equipped to fashion workable solutions to strategic problems, including that of putting the boot into Communist Russia. The future archive of the Reagan years may well confirm that Casey ran true to form as DCI, and that he was not merely a prop in Bob Woodward's ventriloquist act.

—B. Nelson MacPherson
Calgary, Alberta

The Shelling Continues

As a regular reader of your British companion magazine, I picked up your July issue out of curiosity. I read with interest the letters printed from two Irish, oh excuse me, *American* readers.

Picture this: a group in New York State declares it represents people who, undisputed fact, held power long ago and have had a raw deal since because of "colonialism." Perhaps we could call them, let's see now, Indians. Despite failing at the last election (1992) to muster enough support from those it purports to represent to gain *even one seat*, the group nevertheless demands, with no mandate at all, that the New York State government should give it power. This demand is not accommodated.

The group commences to bomb shopping malls and the like, blowing people to bloody ribbons. Should the government surrender power to these people, or seek to prosecute them? The question barely needs asking. The government takes the latter course.

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Twenty-five years later around 3,500 have died (a fraction of the number of U.S. homicides *per year*). A member of the "political wing" of the group flies to Britain, where he says nothing of any substance whatsoever but that naturally it is the government that is obstructing peace. While he is in Britain his group sets off another explosion in New York. The British, some of whom suffer strange mental illness causing them to perceive themselves in fact to be Indian, receive him with drooling adulation guaranteeing funds, and thus bombs, for the group and condemning the U.S. for the present situation.

And by the way, the group is vehemently socialist, radically so in U.S. terms. Your correspondents would instantly rally to the cause, I don't think.

—Paul F. Kennedy
London, England

I was wondering how long it would be before some rabid Anglophile would write in and attack those readers who had the intelligence to see through and criticize the British propaganda appearing in your magazine about Northern Ireland. Mr. Bond trots out the usual line about the six counties being "part of the United Kingdom." (You mean the same way those thirteen upstart colonies back in 1776 were part of the British Empire, Mr. Bond?) And of course, if we allow anyone into this country from the North who works to see Ireland united and free of British misrule, Gerry Adams in this case, we are "cozying up to a vicious terrorist." That's odd. Mr. Adams has never been convicted of any terrorist activity, though he certainly has been on the receiving end of it, from being interned without trial in the seventies, to an attempt on his life by a pro-British death squad (no doubt "patriots" in Mr. Bond's view) in the eighties.

Bond's vicious anti-Irish bigotry is clear by his referring to the critics of the anti-Adams article as "leprechauns" hung over on "Irish whiskey." His idiotic statement that the people of the six counties need "protection" from the IRA is made even more so by the fact that the people in Northern Ireland most in need of protection are the Nationalist Irish, who for the crime of wanting to be Irish in Ireland have been subject to a decades-long terror campaign of discrimination, intimidation, and fiendish murder from both the British "security forces" and their Hezbollah-like proxies, the UDA, UVE, Red Hand Commandos, and others. IRA violence is in response to this violence, not the cause of it. Unfortunately, a bigoted lout like Mr. Bond cannot see beyond his own Anglophilia. Perhaps he was just hung over from swilling too much Bass Ale.

—Kevin Michaels
Trenton, New Jersey

On the Program

I was understandably alarmed when a conservative friend of mine excreted a copy of your review and suggested that I learn to read it. At first, I was lost in a miasma of liberal confusion, especially when I saw that your magazine was lacking in connect-the-dot puzzles and picture outlines upon which I exercise my favorite red crayon. It was the January 1994 edition and it was simply chockfull of what I later discovered were "sentences" and "paragraphs," etc. ("Etc.")

The atrophied ultra-right hemisphere of my left-leaning brain was flooded with the pristine light of conservative reason. I spoke in tongues of ecstasy known only to Peter Mark Roget and William F. Buckley. I wanted to Sing! To Dance! To have myself tested for Venereal Disease! The long Winter was over! Hail the Sun!

I especially enjoyed John Corry's exposition on the radical Gay Left's practice of outing suspected wisenheimers. Like Ed Koch, I now refuse to discuss my private life, because every time I do, someone dials 911 and the fire marshal shows up and douses me with flame retardant foam; actually, that *is* my private life but I only do it to amuse my neighbors.

I disagree with you only on one matter: your assertion that Rush Limbaugh is the greatest living American. This is false. Mortan Sorefkin, who owns a deli-bakery in Spokane, Washington, once showed me what he claimed was a Congressional Medal of Honor, but which looked more like hot pastrami on rye. However, when he explained to me why it was encrusted with sesame seeds, I had to believe him. Mortan Espin Sorefkin is, without a doubt, the greatest living American. Just don't ask him about it; he'll talk your ear off.

—Samantha Liberalboots Young
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Latest Recruit

For months, people have been whining in your Correspondence column about the exposure you've been giving the Clintons. Why, they are even canceling their subscriptions. Well, I happen to like the work you're doing on the Slicksters, so I'm subscribing.

Your sales people shouldn't worry. The cancelees will be back. Where else are they going to read about the ins and the outs of Billy Boy's resignation in disgrace . . . ?

—Pete Skurkiss
Chester, New Jersey

Hitachi and the Cold War

I'd like to correct a point made in a letter to the editor in the August 1994 issue. Referencing the article "Decontrol Freaks" (*TAS*, June 1994), a reader stated that Hitachi supplied the former Soviet Union with the computer-controlled milling equipment that enabled it to manufacture nearly silent submarine propellers during the Cold War. Hitachi did not supply this equipment.

—M. Kuwae
Vice President, General Manager
Hitachi America, Ltd.
Tarrytown, New York

Encore

David Brock's piece, "The Travelgate Cover-Up" (*TAS*, June 1994) shows how innocent bystanders are too often caught in the media wake created by the zeal to prosecute the Clinton administration in the press. Mr. Brock restates in his article an often-repeated falsehood—that Worthen Bank of Little Rock is controlled by the Stephens family. This is not true. While Stephens family members own Worthen stock, their collective investments represent only a minority position, and the family does not now, nor has it ever, "controlled" Worthen Bank.

Stephens Inc. was never "forced to sell" World Wide Travel because it never owned World Wide Travel. Additionally, it is my understanding that Worthen Bank sold its travel affiliate years before we made our investment in the bank.

—Warren A. Stephens
President, Stephens Inc.
Little Rock, Arkansas

David Brock replies:
Every reference I can find to the Stephens' investment in Worthen Bank refers to a "controlling interest"; technically, however, it would have been more correct to say that Worthen, not Stephens, sold off World Wide Travel. ❐

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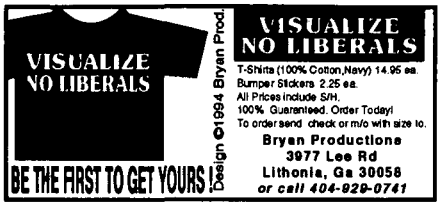
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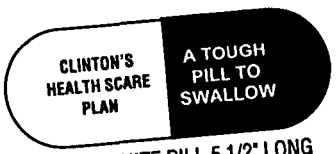

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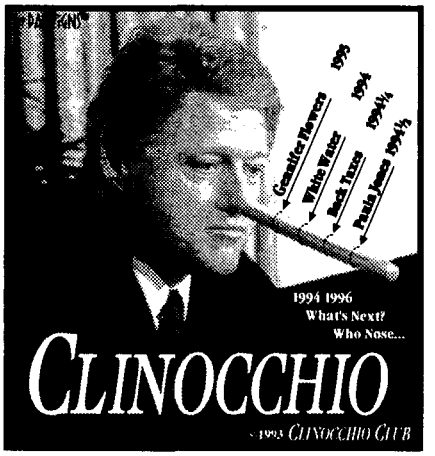

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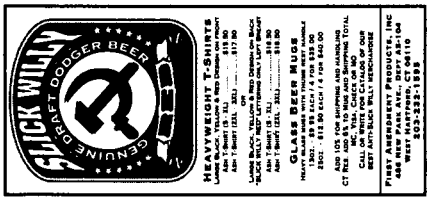

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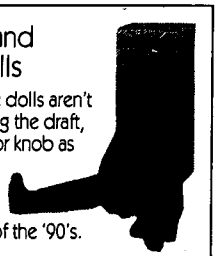

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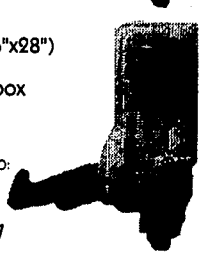

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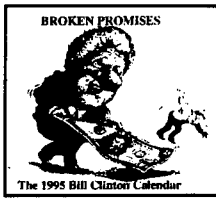

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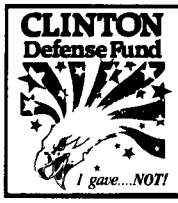

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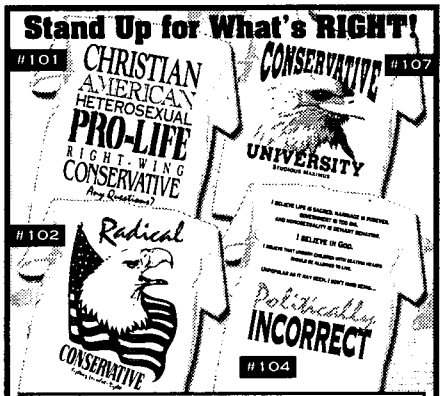

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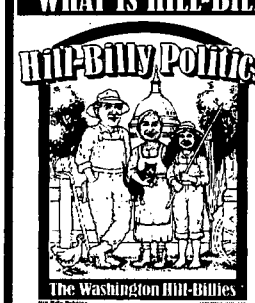

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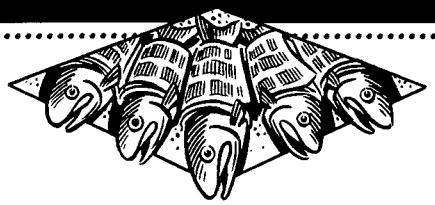

Washington Post

In the course of praising his own Goodwill Games, held this year in St. Petersburg, Russia, the spectacularly laid-back Ted Turner coolly depicts the 1972 massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics:

But on the whole, in a country where just about nothing runs smoothly, Turner characterized the multi-sport competition as "a smash success. Glitches? There's glitches at the Olympics too. I mean, how many glitches did the Israelis have in Munich?"

[August 2, 1994]

Santa Barbara News-Press

How one of business's "selfish monsters" elicited Visions of Hell in the mind of William R. Noack, stargazer:

The other night the entire sky of Santa Barbara was lit up for hours by four enormous searchlights advertising one small private business south of the freeway.

In fact, far outside the city limits in Montecito and in Mission Canyon the night sky was disturbed by strobing flashes of light.

Beautiful views of the stars were obliterated. Even wild animals scurried about with fear in their eyes from this heavenly disruption by one man's advertising decision.

What selfish monster would force man and beast alike for many miles in every direction to watch his light show?

By what right is one business allowed to disturb the peace and take away the rights of everyone else?

If one is allowed to use a searchlight to attract customers shouldn't every other business be given the same right?

If this starts a trend, I could imagine a typical Santa Barbara night in a few months where the night sky would look like a cross between Las Vegas and London during the Blitz.

[July 19, 1994]

Tatler

The madness of economic growth soundly debunked by Anita Roddick, a staunch defender of the Great Depression, the Carter economy, and the coming Clinton recession:

Since "the special period" when Soviet investment was suddenly withdrawn, Cubans have lost an average of 20 pounds each. The fact itself reads like the stuff of propaganda. The reality was altogether different. What amazed me was how quickly you could fall in love with the economics of less. There are no ads, no billboards, no graffiti, no shops, no cars. People perch on the sea wall in couples, in groups, and talk. They are affectionate and caring, with a real sense of unity and an honest reverence for Fidel Castro.

Everybody seems to be working for public good rather than private greed. In the morning, I would see clusters of volunteers—government ministers, white- and blue-collar workers—heading out into the countryside to work in the fields. They all do it for 10 days each month.

The threat that Cuba poses to Western business interests is that it is a society that knows how to live without excess, without consumerism or commercialism. *That* is the revolution America fears. It has the best healthcare system in the world, with one doctor to every 196 citizens (the States manages a 1:405 ratio). It has almost 100-per-cent literacy. If a system that exists under such severe economic restraints can manage such achievements, there is surely a lot it can teach us.

One thing that really struck me was the enthusiasm of the foreign diplomats I encountered. One went so far as to mention Utopia. For myself, I felt there was no horizon I could not get above or beyond in Cuba. I remember with such affection waking up and thinking, "Here I am where I ought to be, because *here* I could belong."

[October 1993]

Empire State Report

Thus conclude two pages of idiot vaporing from someone by the name of Haywood Burns, a dean and professor at CUNY School of Law at Queens College writing for a series magisterially named "21st Century Essays":

In meeting the challenge of diversity, New Yorkers must neither accentuate nor submerge our differences. We need to learn to accept and respect them, with an acceptance and respect that goes beyond mere tolerance, to an appreciation and even a celebration of both the riches and strength we all bring one to another, and of the great unity that is possible in diversity.

[April 1994]

Milwaukee Journal

Editorial musings on "ugly smelly rivers" that ebb and swell and on numbers that squish:

How wide and deep does hate run in the United States? Congress wisely sought to measure some dimensions of the ugly, smelly river of intolerance coursing through American life when it passed the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990. The other day the FBI issued its first report under the law; the agency said 7,700 hate crimes were reported to it for last year.

So, is hate ebbing or swelling? It's too early to say; the nation will need a few years' worth of statistics to answer that question. But even then the answer might be a guess on account of squishy numbers. . . .

Nonetheless, the 7,700 reported crimes are worrisome—a point dramatized by the presence of FBI Director Louis Freeh in Germany as the report was released. . . . Hate crimes are likely a bigger problem in the U.S. than they are in Germany, where the resurgence of hate groups has gotten a good deal of international press.

[July 1, 1994]

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San Francisco Chronicle

rely a practical joke penned by one Limbaugh's espionage agents, or rhaps Mrs. R. Summer is actually eanor Roosevelt awakened from cades of stony slumber:

st week was my first Gay Pride Parade d I was really excited to attend, because ave always had genuine respect for ys and lesbians. That is, until the rade. I expected to see beautiful cos-nes, wonderful floats, singing and danc-g reflecting the many artistic, talented embers of the gay community, whom I ve known and shared much of my life th.

My husband, myself and four of our ildren attended what we expected to be wonderful afternoon and memorable ther's Day. Something a little differ-t. . . Boy!. . . Were we shocked and rprised. This most likely will be the st and last Gay Pride Parade for all of . What a shame. And what a horrible ay to introduce the gay and lesbian mmunity to our children!

Let's cut right to the nitty grit. "Dykes Bikes" is a wild and exciting sight nor-ally. But what right do they have to rade around half-to-totally naked? What stumes some did decide to wear were in ry bad taste. They made total fools of emselves in front of tens of thousands of ople.

I'm certainly not going to let the gay en off the hook either. The "girls" who ere camping it up in drag were wonderful, d the one float was great. But, who the ll gave those others the right to parade ound with their genitals hanging out and pping around?

Not only were the children shocked, but e adults were ashamed for telling the kids w exciting this was going to be and what great way for children to learn equal spect for homosexual members of our ciety.

We heterosexuals would never do such disgusting thing in public, and if we did, e'd be arrested on the spot! How did ey get permission to do such a thing? In blic, on Sunday, in daylight, in the cen-r of downtown San Francisco . . . on ther's Day?. . . or any day for that mat-r.

I am angry and very upset. I want an ology to all of us who attended the rade. We attended to show our respect, d in return were slapped in the face with srespect, insulted.

[July 6, 1994]

Indiana University Press

A semi-literate advertisement from a Hoosier house of publication booms another primitive tome written by a feminist primate for other inhabitants of the zoo:

Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body
Shannon Bell

Bell shows how the flesh-and-blood sexual female body engaged in sexual interaction for payment has no inherent meaning and is signified differently in different cultures or discourses. The author contends that modernity has produced "the prostitute" as the other within the categorical other woman.

248 pages, paper $12.95 (also in cloth $35.00)

[July 1994]

Washington Post

A Jo Ann Lewis reviews the esoteric pics of the esteemed Jeanne Dunning to the twitters of feminists—or is Jo Ann Lewis a pseudonym for one of the guys, say Ralph Nader?

At first encounter with three paired works titled "Leaking"—each featuring an extreme close-up of a single luscious tomato, along with a second shot of a woman devouring one—Dunning seems to be pondering summer's bounty. Yet something about these tomatoes is different: Red and ripe and peeled to expose their heavily veined flesh, engorged with juice and seeds, they seem about to explode out of the confines of their black oval frames. Clearly these are no ordinary berries. Nor were they intended to lure viewers to the nearest fruit stand.

What Dunning has done, however, is turn traditional artistic practice upside down: In a refreshing change, she has subjected the male anatomy (or its equivalents) to the lascivious female gaze. Lifted the fig leaf, one might say.

By any measure, Dunning's nude tomatoes—her human nudes notwithstanding—are the most seductive images in her show. But this is a seduction with an edge, designed to yank you from a sensuous mood to one of revulsion as you contemplate a laughing woman holding a punctured tomato in her teeth, its innards running like drool down her vampirelike chin. Yuck.

Seduction and repulsion, excitement and fear, eroticism and the need to control. It is the wobbly, tremulous line between these ambivalent feelings and forces that Dunning sets out to explore.

[July 21, 1994]

Bradenton Herald

What happened in the editorial offices of a fabulous Florida gazette when the lithium ran out:

We can't let this one pass. We received this week a six-page offer from publisher Ronald E. Burr to subscribe to *The American Spectator*, a magazine that says its mission is to print the truth.

On page two we found the following sentence. "The news media are a giant version of National Public Radio staffed by radical feminists and balding SDS refugees calling for government action on everything from free lunches for unemployed blank-verse poets to national health insurance."

The *Bradenton Herald* newsroom must be anomaly [sic], according to the [sic] Burr's definition. We have few balding persons let alone alumni of SDS. In fact, most of our staff probably don't know what the letters mean, much less what Students for a Democratic Society stood for during the 1960s.

Nor do we ever remember editorializing for free lunches for unemployed blank-verse poets.

Yes, we did protest when the [sic] President Reagan tried to call ketchup a vegetable on school lunch menus, but so did George Will.

[July 9, 1994]

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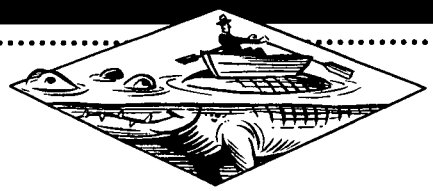

Hey There, Alligator

Victor Bailly, a reticent Puerto Rican, is a Humane Law Enforcement Officer of the ASPCA, and as such serves as an interlocutor between City Hall and the Animal Kingdom. While he doesn't *own* a dog, in a sense he has more than half a million, along with an even larger number of felines, almost a thousand horses, countless rodents and reptiles, and a population of poisonous snakes, fighting cocks, wolf-dogs, and other exotica that, though small, is never quite as small as expected.

Robert O'Neill, the retired NYPD lieutenant who heads Humane Law Enforcement, began with the ASPCA in January, and he is still somewhat unaccustomed to the "special kind of person" who is attracted to the work. He mentioned one such colleague to a co-worker.

"She had a panther jumping around the office the other day."

"It was a cub."

"It was no cub. Did you see her arms?"

"I saw her panty hose."

"There's a window of a few weeks, when they grow up, where you don't have to keep 'em in a cage," he explained. "My guess, that week was up."

Bailly and O'Neill went to Bedford-Stuyvesant to investigate a complaint about a dog that had been kept outside in a backyard throughout the winter storms. Bailly, in uniform, knocked at the door of the narrow row house and gave the generic response of "Officer" when asked who it was. We were admitted by a small girl who fetched a sleepy teenage cousin from the basement. He took us to the kitchen for a look in the back yard, where the dog, an excitable yellow mutt with tar markings on the flanks, yelped at the window as we approached. The lady of the house, reached by telephone at work, gave her permission for the ASPCA to take the animal to a shelter. The dog, a stray, had bitten another cousin several months ago, though the incident was not reported and neither biter nor bitee was tested for rabies. ("Well, he's either fine or he's dead," mused O'Neill.)

As Bailly made the arrangements, a substantial young woman sat on a couch in front of the television, eating a cheeseburger. "Who told about us? Who complained?" she asked, sternly.

"Could have been anyone. We have to keep it confidential," explained O'Neill, affably dodging what appeared to be indignant demand.

The woman snorted: "I want to call to thank them! I never liked that dog. Go ahead, take him!"

After we left, the discussion was of canine vogues, how German shepherds and Doberman pinschers have been supplanted by pit bulls and Rottweilers. "How are you with pit bulls, Victor?" asked O'Neill.

"Careful," said Bailly. "I respect them and fear them. The pressure from the jaws really could kill you. Some people hang them from trees while they clamp on branches, hang weights on them. They shoot them with steroids, train them like fighters."

With that in mind, it was not difficult to understand his trepidation at being greeted by two such animals roaming loose in a Long Island pet store.

"Are they friendly?" he asked.

"Yeah."

"Good. Now put them away."

We were visiting to check out a report that kittens were being fed to pythons at the store. It was greeted with some skepticism, less for any disbelief in human cruelty than for practical reasons. "Cats are feisty, they have claws and teeth," said Bailly. "Snakes are expensive and delicate animals, and take a long time to heal they're hurt." If the cat was drugged, th snake would ingest the chemical as we and declawing is prohibitively expensive.

The three managers who presente themselves weighed a collective 800 lb Two of them were skinheads, and the arms were adorned with a variety of tattoo and keloid scars. The store had a Gabo viper, several rattlesnakes, caimans, allig tors, and monitor lizards in cages with sign that said "For Exhibition Only." There wa some quiet speculation as to whether th management might be prevailed upon if loving family, with adequate cash, wishe to clasp a viper to its bosom.

Bailly asked what the pythons—slee and massive snakes, one of which wa albino and several of which were longe than eight feet—were fed, and was to "Frozen guinea pigs." The answe seemed a shifty improvisation until w looked in a freezer in the back, whic was fully stocked with white guinea pig and bags of piebald mice. A nearby ove indicated that as far as a snake is con cerned, guinea pigs are microwavable Another sign announced that for $4, on could purchase a white rat to feed to th alligators.

But aside from the cruelty of th rat-sport, there was no immediat cause for action. The cages wer clean and the animals well-maintained The license for the alligators was in o der, and permits for the caimans wer purportedly pending. When asked abou a particular rattlesnake, however, th answer was decidedly less satisfactory "Somebody dropped it off," said a skin head, in a soft, slightly defensive schoo boy mumble. "He didn't want it, an asked if I could take it."

As we prepared to leave, a man i dark glasses and a bolo tie halted for moment at the sight of the uniforms, the walked over to joke with the manager We left them beside a wall of tabloi clippings about fatal crocodile attack and T-shirts patterned with reptile cou ples in positions from the *Kama Sutra* Outside, the officers compared notes an made plans for a subsequent visit, whic would hopefully include federal agent from Fish and Wildlife.

"Did you notice the guy who came i as we left?" remarked Bailly as w drove off. "He was wearing snakeski boots." —***Edward Conlo***

Edward Conlon is a writer living in the Bronx.

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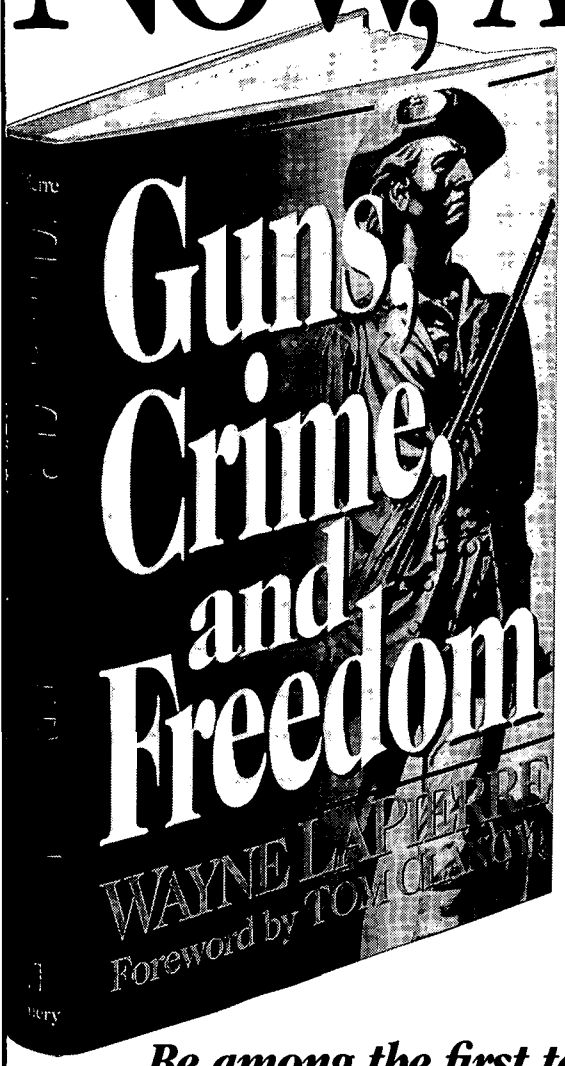

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